

ABSTRACT

AFRICANA WOMEN'S STUDIES

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BREAKING SILENCE: GENDERED AND SEXUAL IDENTITIES AND HIV/AIDS

RISK AMONGST YOUTH IN KENYA

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The voices of youth are typically absent in research on African communities. The assumption is that children are not really active subjects, and that adults can speak and act on their behalf. This study addresses the walls of silence between children and parents; teachers and learners and between boys and girls, on matters of gender, sexuality and HIV/AIDS. Within these walls, youth construct and re-construct their roles as either feminine or masculine. We see them challenging social constructs and reclaiming their voices and their right to be heard as experts about their own gendered and sexual lives.

Using interviews and focus group discussions, a tri-site study was carried out in Kenya, and the findings presented illustrate how boys and girls construct their identities, negotiating, adapting to and resisting common articulations of masculinity and femininity. It demonstrates why it is wrong to constantly associate gender with women and girls, focusing on masculinity and femininity, not in isolation of each other, but as relational identities which derive their meaning from each other.

“Breaking Silence” focuses on gender, sexuality and HIV/AIDS risk amongst youth, demonstrating how youth can empower themselves to steer their agenda and

articulate what it means to be particular boys or girls, while developing strategies to deal with their issues.

BREAKING SILENCE: GENDERED AND SEXUAL IDENTITIES AND HIV/AIDS
RISK AMONGST YOUTH IN KENYA

A DISSERTATION

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ABBREVIATIONS

AIDS	Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
CBS	Central Bureau of Statistics of Kenya
DfID	Department for International Development (British)
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GOK/ACU	Government of Kenya/ AIDS Control Unit
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
ICD	International Cooperation for Development
IDI	Individual In-Depth Interview
KDHS	Kenya Demographic Health Survey
MI	Macrointernational Inc
MOH	Ministry of Health (Kenya)
NACC	National AIDS Control Council
NCPD	National Council for Population Development (Kenya)
NGO	Non Governmental Organization
STD	Sexually Transmitted Diseases
UNAIDS	Joint United Nations Program on HIV/AIDS
USAID	United States of America International Development
QSR Nu*dist	Computer based software for analyzing qualitative data.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Gendered Identity Construction

Gendered Identity Construction is how we see ourselves and how we behave as boys and girls, men and women, depending upon popular ways of classifying and treating boys and girls, men and women, and the importance attributed to this in any given community. These associations are learned, and boys/men and girls/women are encouraged to identify with what are considered to be masculine and feminine characteristics and forms of behavior.

Gender Sensitivity

Gender Sensitivity is the state of knowledge of the socially constructed differences between boys and girls, and their needs. It is used to identify and understand the problems arising from these differences and to further act tangibly and in empathy with the problems and needs.

Sexualization

To sexualize a person is to make him or her sexually appealing. The assumption here is that sexual attraction is not simply instinctual, but that people construct certain characteristics and forms of behavior as sexually appealing, a practice that is often influenced by peer groups and by popular cultural representations of sexuality and gender.

Chira – Is a Luo term for a body wasting illness that is believed to afflict people who break cultural taboos, and is a term that is commonly used to police young Luo and Luhya women.

Dame wa mtaa – Swahili slang for ladies of the street or prostitute.

Kitenge – Swahili for wrap cloth used by women to wrap around the waist.

Kiti moto – Swahili for three legged traditional stool.

Madiaba – Swahili slang for buttocks.

Madrassa – Swahili for Muslim religious instruction.

Matatu – Swahili for private public transportation, usually mini vans.

Matatu touts - Swahili for *matatu* fare conductors.

Mirò – Swahili slang for black African.

Mkhebe – Luhya for confined or initiated males or females.

Mlo kwa kazi - Swahili for “food for work”.

Umetoka kuonjwa-onjwa – Swahili for have you come from being tasted i.e. sexually?

Sio mimi unasomea — Swahili for “you are not reading/studying for me.”

Sunna – Swahili for cutting only the ti of the clitoris.

Wewe ni bibi yangu – Swahili for “you are my wife”.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This is a qualitative exploratory field study investigating the factors contributing to the construction of gendered and sexual identities in relation to being at risk for Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV), by boys and girls living specifically in Kenya, East Africa. The goal of the research is to provide an opportunity for the voices of the youth to be heard.

HIV is the retrovirus that causes Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS). HIV/AIDS is a major development challenge in Africa, and since the 1980s, has continued to devastate the lives of a vast number of people throughout the African continent. While remarkable efforts are being made to minimize the spread of HIV and its impact, the AIDS pandemic has continued unabated and has claimed millions of lives the world over, particularly in developing countries and more specifically, in sub-Saharan Africa. The rising prevalence rates and the rapid spread of HIV/AIDS suggest that the epidemic has not reached its equilibrium in most of Africa, hence the need for continued research and interventions into ways of minimizing its spread as well as the social and economic impact of the disease on the people, especially the children. The region of Eastern Africa is one of the most affected areas in the world. More than half of the newly

HIV infected individuals are between the ages of fifteen to twenty four.¹

Throughout the region, the risk of HIV infection for young women is increasing. Out of 8,600,000 young people living with HIV/AIDS in sub-Saharan Africa, 67 percent are young women and 33 percent are young men.²

At the onset of the epidemic, research and interventions for HIV/AIDS prevention largely focused on bio-medical consequences of the disease and ignored the varying geographical, behavioral, socio-cultural, and economic contexts underlying the cause of the epidemic in Africa. Studies by the Joint United Nations Program on AIDS predominantly targeted groups considered at high risk for HIV infection. The targeted groups included commercial sex workers, men who have sex with men, injecting drug users and prisoners, but left out a large group of people potentially at risk.³ The diffusion of HIV/AIDS from the targeted group to the general population is evident in widespread infections among most populations of African countries. The increasing spread and devastating socioeconomic impact of the epidemic have stimulated a shift of research priorities from a biomedical and target group focus to the societal context of sexual behavior amongst youth and HIV/AIDS. The last two decades have seen a rise and a broadening of studies on HIV/AIDS and the antecedent sexual behavior from epidemiological contexts to include population-based surveys, as well as small-scale qualitative studies focusing on attitudes and behavior facilitating the spread of the disease.

¹*Young People and HIV/AIDS Opportunity in Crisis*, UNICEF, UNAIDS, WHO (Geneva: UN, 2001), 4.

²*Ibid.*

³*At Risk and Neglected: Four Key Populations, Report on The Global AIDS Epidemic* (Geneva: UNAIDS, 2006), 2.

Located in East Africa, Kenya is one of the countries in sub-Saharan Africa most affected by the AIDS epidemic. The country is culturally diverse, with over forty two ethnic groups and cultures. The major ethnic groups are Kikuyu, Luo, Luhya, Kamba, Kalenjin, Mijikenda, Meru, Embu and Gusii, each, concentrated in specific regions of the country. Kikuyus are predominant in Central Province, Luos and Kisiis in Nyanza province and, Luhya live in Western Province, Kambas, Merus and Embus in Eastern Province and Kalenjins inhabit the Rift Valley Province. The ethnic and cultural diversity makes it difficult to implement AIDS prevention campaigns, as no single program would be appropriate for all cultural contexts.

Significance of the Study

The key significance of this study is to break the silence of Kenyan youth and add to the knowledge base of how this group constructs its sexual and gendered identities. The study addresses the walls of silence between children and their parents, teachers and learners and between boys and girls on matters of gender, sexuality and HIV/AIDS knowledge. Within these walls, individuals construct and reconstruct their roles as either feminine or masculine. The goal of this study is for youth to challenge social constructs of gender, reclaim their voices and their right to be heard as experts about their own gendered and sexual lives.

The study was funded by International Cooperation for Development. ICD is a British-based international development charity that works to promote social justice and eradication of poverty through partnerships with civil groups and governments in developing countries. The study will furnish educators, policy makers and parents with vital and comprehensive information about the cultures and identities of young people

across Kenya. The importance of such information has been emphasized at many regional African HIV/AIDS forums, where several delegates have made the point that life skills education would only be effective in mitigating the impact of HIV/AIDS if it was genuinely relevant. In other words, it must be based upon a solid and accurate understanding of the concerns, fears, pleasures and desires of young people, and of the identities and relationships they forge as boys and girls growing up in the complex and demanding environment of 21st century Africa.

Theoretical Framework

The researcher set out to discover exactly how young people in Kenya feel about themselves and their experiences, giving them a chance to articulate their thoughts with a minimum of pressure or interference. The research methods focused on creating an environment in which the interviewees discussed their feelings freely and fearlessly. In particular, the approach drew on the concerns articulated by feminist researchers, to give a voice to people from disenfranchised groups, whose views and experiences have not been accorded the same legitimacy as those of other groups in the past.⁴ Every effort was made to treat all the young interviewees with an adult level of respect, as one would treat any expert discussing issues within their chosen field. The researcher would have preferred for the interviewees to address certain general themes, but rather, encouraged them to set the agenda for the interviews and to raise and discuss any subject they personally considered important. In addition to the loosely structured individual and group interviews, the other research methods employed, participant and non-participant

⁴Liz Stanley, *Feminist Praxis: Research, Theory and Epistemology in Feminist Sociology* (London: Routledge, 1990), 23.

observation, and optional diary keeping served as examples of good practice that can be successfully incorporated into pupil-centered life skills education in Kenya in the future.

The study was informed by the *discourse theory* of conceptualizing gendered identities, which states that identities such as male, female, black and white only exist in relation to each other, and because we have words to describe them.⁵ Researchers, previously influenced by this theory, have adopted a social constructionist rather than a social realist epistemology, which holds that gender identities are not fixed but are continually developing according to the different ways in which individuals construct or perceive themselves, and their collusion with or resistance to cultural norms and expectations.⁶

In this study, the researcher advocated a social constructionist position, which addresses people as active individuals who are always producing and negotiating their gender identities, whether consciously or not. The interviewees' accounts of themselves and the opposite sex were taken not only as descriptions of culturally determined gender roles and characteristics, but of the ways in which they are actively *producing* their social identities, relationships and emotions in relation to one another.

⁵Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punishment: The Birth of the Prison* (England: Penguin, 1979); Foucault, M., "Two Lectures", in *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings by Michel Foucault, 1972-1977*, ed. Gordon, C. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980); Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction* (New York: Vintage House, 1980a).

⁶Margaret Wetherell and Edley N, "Gender Practices: Steps in the Analysis of Men and Masculinities," in *Standpoints and Differences: Essays in the Practice of Feminist Psychology*, eds. Henwood K., Griffin C. and Phoenix A. (London: Sage 1998); Stephen Frosh, Ann Phoenix, and Robb Pattman, *Young Masculinities: Understanding Boys in Contemporary Society* (London: Palgrave, 2002); Wendy Hollway, *Subjectivity and Method in Psychology* (London: Sage, 1989) and Vivien Burr, *An Introduction to Social Constructionism* (London: Routledge, 1995).

Research Methodology

The research method used in this study was ethnographic field research whereby the research team immersed itself in the social environments of Kenyan youth for the purpose of gathering detailed data about their sexual and gender identity construction processes. This research method is well-suited for studying social processes using a range of data collection methods including field notes, one-on-one and focus group interviews, observations and some forms of content analysis such as written diaries. Although this method generates rich data and has high validity because understanding is embedded in real life scenarios in the actual words of the participants, it has lower reliability as it is subjective and is usually not generalizable. In this particular case, the advantages included real-life data in participants' social settings, flexibility, high face validity (meanings could be clarified since the participants were creating responses, not checking off categories that had been created that may not fully represent their experiences), speedy results, group formats generated discussions, lots of data was quickly generated and when some participants failed to show up, the researcher still had enough data collected.

Rationale for the Research Methods

A key consideration in the design of this qualitative, exploratory field study was to ensure subject centered-ness and gender sensitivity by positioning young people of both sexes at the heart of the research process. This would involve providing the interviewees with ample space to talk as experts, as they construct themselves and address specific issues concerning them and their relationships with others. The research in the three study sites would adopt a purely qualitative approach, enabling the

researchers to engage – inter-subjectively and dialogically – with the interviewees, in ways that would generate insights that are “central to their construction of the [interviewees’] world.”⁷ Within this qualitative paradigm, the researcher selected very specific methods - individual in-depth interviews, single sex focus group discussions, mixed sex focus group discussions, participant and non-participant observation, and the analysis of occasional diaries, to illuminate different aspects of the interviewees’ social worlds as they themselves construct and experience them.

Individual in-Depth Interviews and Focus Group Discussions

Individual in-Depth Interviews (IDIs) and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were used as the primary methods through which the study team investigated the ways in which young people construct their identities in different social settings. The interviewees were encouraged not only to address the main research themes – relations with and attitudes towards peers of different sexes, parents and teachers; interests and leisure pursuits; pleasures and fears; hopes and aspirations; role models; views on HIV/AIDS – but also to set the agenda in pursuing issues that they felt were significant to them. The researcher hoped that this would make the interviewees feel at ease, for the opportunity to talk about themselves and about issues of gender and sexuality with friendly, non-judgmental adults – probably for the first time in their lives. The experience of participating in *loosely structured interviews* designed to enhance inter-subjective and dialogical relationships among research interviewees and between them

⁷Bronwyn Davies, *Life in the Classroom and in the Playground: The Accounts of Primary School Children* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982); Bronwyn Davies, *Frogs and Snails and Feminist Tales: Pre-School Children and Gender* (U.S.A. Routledge & Kegan Paul, Sydney University, Sydney, 1989).

and researchers is uncommon for most young people in Africa.⁸ In the study, young people were able to define themselves in relation to the adult researchers in ways the researcher believes would have been impossible using other methodological approaches. Focus group discussions served as a good example of the subject centered-ness of this research. In all the nine forums, the single sex youth groups, the mixed sex youth groups and the mixed sex youth and adult groups, the participants exercised their freedom to set the agenda by constructing their future selves in discussion topics such as “The person I would like to be.”

Nine FGDs and twenty nine IDIs were held with boys and girls aged thirteen to twenty-five years old between the months of May, June and July 2006. Information provided by the participants - gender, age, marital status, ethnic affiliation and region of residence - was used to stratify FGD participants in order to explore views of youth exposed to different sexual experiences and cultural contexts. The focus groups for the young women and men comprised both the sexually experienced and inexperienced. Of the nine FGDs, three in each study site were conducted with eighty participants total as follows: Three groups comprising young married and unmarried women only; three groups comprising young married and unmarried men only and three groups comprising young men, women and their significant adults.

FGDs allow a small group of participants with similar characteristics to discuss issues of common interest with the guidance of a facilitator or moderator, in which participants do not necessarily need to reveal personal information. FGDs are important

⁸Lynn Davies, “Researching Democratic Understanding in Primary School” (*Journal of Education*, No. 61, May 1999), 39 – 48).

in exploring common attitudes, norms and practices of social behavior. FGD questionnaires were used in this study to explore a range of topics.⁹ The version of the FGD questionnaire appears in Appendix A. Anonymity is important and was encouraged when discussing personal and sensitive topics such as sexual behavior of participants, where they may have to admit to behavior socially disapproved, such as premarital sex or extra marital sex.

IDIs were held with participants drawn from the focus group participants, using a pre-designed questionnaire guide given in Appendix B. IDIs explored the more personal and sensitive issues of how youth perceive and interpret their individual vulnerability to HIV at two stages of their sexual lives: during sexual initiation and at later sexual relationships, rather than to obtain detailed sexual histories. IDIs provide opportunity for probing participants for greater depth and further explanation or clarity on their answers.¹⁰ In-depth participants were purposely drawn from FGD participants in order to understand how individual perceptions and opinions conformed or diverged from what was expressed in the group discussions. Only individuals fifteen years and older, who reported ever having sexual intercourse were selected for follow-up IDIs because this group was best-suited to address some aspects of one of the research questions. The participants for follow up IDIs were identified after the FGDs by administering a short questionnaire that collected basic socio-demographic characteristics and sexual experiences of participants. The follow-up IDIs focused on the first and recent and/or

⁹Monique Hennick and I. Diamond, "Using Focus Groups in Social Research" in *Handbook of the Psychology of Interviewing*, eds. Amina Memon and R. Bull, John Wiley & Sons (Chichester, England: 1999), 113-139.

¹⁰Ibid.

current sexual relationships in order to minimize recall errors. It was assumed that the first sexual intercourse is a memorable event, the circumstances surrounding which are unlikely to be forgotten. Similarly, activities in a recent or current relationship can easily be remembered compared with events of intermediate relationships. Due to the relatively small number of participants for the follow up IDIs, twenty nine to be exact, the characteristics of sexual behavior and the subjective criteria of risk assessment were examined and not necessarily the prevalence of specific behavior across age groups.

In order to do justice to the interviewee's participation, all the interviews were recorded, unless there was an objection, and transcribed in a way that accurately reflected how, to whom and what the interviewees were saying, including pauses, changes in emotional tone, gestures, and other body and non-verbalized language. The emotions expressed provided important clues as to the processes of identity construction that were taking place during the interviews.¹¹ All the research instruments were originally developed in English and translated into Luhya, Luo, Swahili and Kikuyu, the dominant languages spoken in the respective study sites - Busia, Nyanza and Nakuru.

Occasional Diaries

During the individual interviews, diaries were given out to older girls and boys (ages seventeen to twenty five) on a strictly voluntary basis. Volunteer participants were encouraged to make honest and accurate entries covering their daily actions, feelings and reflections, over a period of two weeks. The idea was to keep the diary documentation

¹¹L. M. Brown & C. Gilligan, *Meeting at the Crossroads: Women's Psychology and Girls' Development* (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1992); J.M. Taylor et al, *Between Voice and Silence: Women and Girls, Race and Relationship* (USA First Harvard University Press, 1997); Frosh et al, *Young Masculinities: Understanding Boys in Contemporary Society* (London: Palgrave , 2002).

occasional, and when time allowed, not a record of one's daily lifestyle activities. The hesitation to have a daily diary entry method was based on the fact that adolescent girls formed fifty percent of the sample, and they were expected to take on domestic responsibilities after school in addition to their school workload. An additional diary keeping responsibility was perceived and communicated to the researcher as burdensome. The researcher asked each diary-keeper to focus on several general themes, and provided them with standardized guidelines on how to record their occasional daily activities, their emotions and feelings, and their relations with significant others. The diaries, notably used in Nakuru, proved to be an invaluable medium through which girls and boys presented themselves in ways that might have been difficult to express in interviews or through observations.

Among the significant adult participants, were teachers in all the study sites schools were asked to document their teachings on life skills and HIV/AIDS, and use the notes during discussions. The researcher encouraged the teachers to position themselves consciously as women and men in relation to their girl and boy students, and to focus on the gender dynamics of their classes – particularly the ways that girls and boys responded to the HIV/AIDS topics they taught. For example, they were asked to record any tension, laughter or moments of embarrassment among the boys and girls, as well as the criteria they used to rate the effectiveness of their teaching.

Observations

The participant and non-participant observation methods were loosely designed and included checklists of things to look for, such as how boys and girls mixed during break-time in school or in community hangouts, and how usual or unusual this was. The

researchers kept an eye on tendencies of popularity among peers of the same or the opposite sex, and documented indicators rating this perceived popularity. Such guided observations helped to focus on forms of interaction and gendered behavior in school, at home, and in the community. In keeping with the dynamic nature of the research, the observation checklists were continually modified in light of specific observations. The researcher showed considerable innovation in providing a variety of sites within which to conduct observations such as organized voluntary trips to the local shopping centers, accompanying the young people to local nightclubs, sports events and to worship places and observing their behavior there.

Pictures

Pictures were minimally used to promote discussion among younger pupils ages thirteen to fifteen on specific topics that may have been regarded as too embarrassing to introduce verbally, and taking cultural sensitivity into consideration. For example, the researcher showed this age group pictures of naked people, asked them to point to their sexual organs, and then questioned them about them. They responded verbally or in writing.

The research initiative began with a workshop in December 2005 in Nairobi Kenya, on the theme *Gender, Sexuality and HIV/AIDS in Education*. The workshop, sponsored by ICD brought together seventy young people with researchers, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), and government officials from Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania to examine and improve current pedagogies and materials for HIV/AIDS and life skills education programs, and to train national researchers to design and carry out research projects. The latter entailed the development and study of qualitative, gender

sensitive research methods including interviews, observations, diary-keeping and pictures, to study the ways that young people perceive their identities, construct their identities, and interact with their peers and others.

After attending the youth HIV/AIDS workshop, the researcher and two other principal researchers set out to redress the above stated imbalance through regional research designed to investigate the experiences and identities of young people in Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania, the three East African countries. Through local NGOs and schools, the researcher individually planned on interviewing sixty young people and twenty significant adults in Kenya, in an effort to understand how they perceive their own lives and experiences; and how these perceptions influence their relationships with others and risk towards HIV/AIDS. By interviewing girls and boys of specific ages and backgrounds, the research was designed to give a voice to young people from socially and politically marginalized groups. Based on the recommendations of the three-nation-study project, the education authorities in the three countries committed themselves to developing life skills education curricula that addresses vital, and thus far largely ignored, issues of gender, sexuality and HIV/AIDS amongst youth. Prior to setting out to conduct the Kenyan study, the researcher and others underwent further training, to equip them with harmonized research parameters, in order to ensure that the findings were compatible and comparable to the other research for regional benefit.

While each researcher was free to choose their own methods, samples and research sites, they were all committed to being gender sensitive and young person centered in the national studies. While the researchers could also choose the specific objectives of the national studies, they agreed to pursue at least one of the following

general objectives that originated from the December 2005 workshop at the request of ICD:

- To investigate ways in which boys and girls construct their identities and develop relationships between people of the same and opposite sex in different settings – at school, at home, in the community – and how these identities and relationships encourage or mitigate the spread of HIV/AIDS;
- To investigate teachers' constructions of girls and boys, and the ways they identify themselves in relation to them, with a view to exploring their sensitivity to gender-based power relations both in and out of school, and their commitment to pupil centered pedagogies;
- To investigate how cultural practices, tradition and modernity are understood by boys and girls, how they relate to the ways that they construct themselves, their gender and their sexuality, and whether these constructions make them more or less susceptible to the spread of HIV;
- To investigate how boys and girls understand and experience their relationships with their duty bearers – mothers, fathers and teachers – and whether young people perceive these relationships to be helpful or otherwise in relation to their feelings, concerns and views about gender and sexuality;
- To identify and document good practices in the family, school and community, and to reflect upon positive research practices that may encourage young people and adults to engage in open, critical discussions about their gender identities, concerns and actions, which may help to protect them from HIV/AIDS and,

- To develop a plan of action, based upon the gender and sexual identities that young people commonly construct, the type of relationships they forge with the significant adults in their lives, and the kind of issues and concerns they raise, to mitigate the spread of HIV/AIDS.

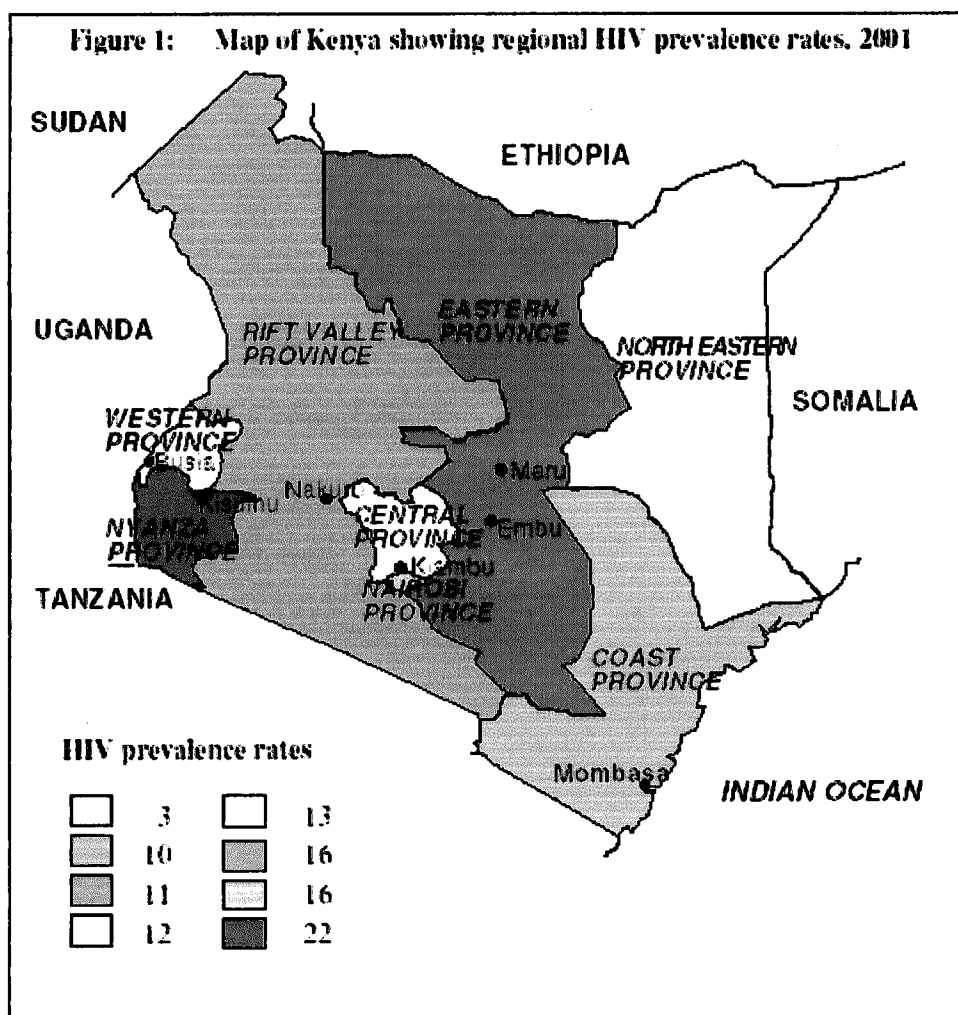
The Research Sites

The study was undertaken in three geographical locations, in rural Busia, Western province, rural Nyanza and the third in urban Nakuru, in Rift Valley province. Busia is one of the poorest and most rural districts in the country, Kisumu is the third largest city but the research focus was in rural Kisumu, while Nakuru is the fourth largest city in Kenya. All the study sites were within reach of local public school settings selected on the basis that they were served by ICD development projects at the time. They were Esifugwe School in Busia district, St. Augustine's High School in Kisumu, and Nakuru High School in Nakuru, purposely selected to reflect differences in social and cultural beliefs and practices, variations in access to AIDS knowledge and services and HIV/AIDS prevalence rates amongst the youth.

The Luo ethnic group predominantly inhabits Kisumu district. The sample for this study was from rural Kisumu. Nakuru district is a peri-urban area in Rift Valley, largely inhabited by the Kikuyu ethnic group. Busia district, inhabited by the Luhyia is a largely rural area, and the poorest of the three regions. The three regions were selected because they have markedly contrasting economic and socio-cultural belief systems that tend to shape people's daily behavior. Busia town has a population of 30,777, Kisumu town has slightly over 322,734 and Nakuru town has 219,366 residents.¹²

¹²Republic of Kenya, *Population figures for Towns and Municipalities* (Central Bureau of Statistics 2003).

Figure 1 below shows the regional HIV prevalence rates in Kenya, in 2001, and the locations of the three study sites. The three regions are meant to be illustrative of the social context of AIDS risk among young people in Kenya and not to be statistically representative of the country. No attempts are made to generalize the results of this study to the wider Kenyan population.



HIV prevalence rates in Nyanza Province have been consistently high compared to rates in Western and Rift Valley Provinces. At the end of the year 2001, 32 percent of people in Nyanza were estimated to be living with HIV/AIDS compared to 15 percent in Western Province. At the district level, estimates from sentinel surveillance data indicate that HIV prevalence rates in Kisumu and Busia were 26 percent and 17 percent respectively.¹³ Socioeconomic, cultural and behavioral factors may explain the observed HIV prevalence rates. The age-sex distribution of HIV prevalence rates is similar to the national levels in all the study sites. For example, in Kisumu HIV prevalence rates among adolescents aged fifteen to nineteen years old are estimated at 22 percent for girls and 5 percent for boys, suggesting that girls are four times more likely to be infected than boys.¹⁴ The quality and quantity of public services and infrastructure vary considerably amongst the three communities. Nakuru is well-served by a network of tarmac roads; the majority of homes have electricity; there are public telephone services, most homes have private water supplies and newspapers are easily accessible. In Kisumu and Busia, almost all the rural roads are subject to closure during the rainy season; most rural homes have no electricity; public telephone services are non-existent; and people depend upon local rivers, streams and ponds for water supplies. The three study sites are further differentiated by access to health and reproductive health services. Nakuru is well-served by both public and private health facilities and Nairobi is within easy reach, about an hour's drive away. There are two well-equipped private hospitals, a

¹³Government of Kenya/AIDS Control Unit, Ministry of Health, and National AIDS Control Council), *AIDS in Kenya: Background, Projections, Impact, Interventions and Policy* (Nairobi: Government Press, 2001).

¹⁴Ministry of Health, *Kisumu district health profile, 2000* (MOH, Kisumu, Kenya: Government Press, 2000).

government hospital, and a number of health centers and private clinics. Proximity to Nairobi enables people in Nakuru to benefit from most AIDS prevention initiatives.

Kisumu is typically a lowland area bordering Lake Victoria. The district is vulnerable to flooding and prone to water and vector-borne diseases such as malaria and diarrhea. The district has forty eight health facilities offering basic health services. The majority of the health facilities are private enterprises located in Kisumu town. Generally, utilization of health services is poor in rural areas because of poor infrastructure, long distances to facilities and inadequate distribution.¹⁵

On the other hand, Busia has one under-equipped and understaffed district hospital and scattered rural health clinics in worse conditions. Both Kisumu and Nakuru districts have benefited from a range of AIDS prevention initiatives, the common one being a nation-wide World Bank funded sexually transmitted infections control project. However, consistently high HIV prevalence rates in Kisumu, and Nyanza province in general, have attracted the attention of several international donors and NGOs focusing on AIDS prevention, care and support activities. A major initiative has been the HIV/AIDS prevention and care project funded by British government Department for International Development (DfID) and managed by Futures Group Europe. Futures Group Europe oversees activities of NGOs and private sector institutions targeting AIDS awareness, prevention and care activities in Nyanza Province, including Kisumu district. Despite all the AIDS initiatives, Kisumu ranks among areas with high HIV prevalence rates. Economic activity is more diversified in Nakuru than in Kisumu or Busia district.

¹⁵Ministry of Health, *Kisumu district health profile*, 2000 (MOH, Kisumu, Kenya: 2000),

Nakuru is a growing industrial town with farming and ranching zones and so most people are employed in farms and factories. The main socioeconomic activities are in retail, hardware, general wholesale, outlets for agro-industrial machinery, motor vehicle trade, spare parts and servicing the agro-chemical retail and wholesale outlets. Nakuru attracts many labor migrants from other parts of Kenya, particularly Nyanza and Western provinces. Integration of people from different cultural backgrounds is likely to influence people's way of life. For purposes of the study, only youth of the Kikuyu ethnic group settled in the Nakuru area were selected.

The cultural beliefs and practices vary considerably between two of the three communities. In Kisumu and Busia, the practice of widow inheritance, a belief in witchcraft, polygyny and *chira*¹⁶ are entrenched components of the Luo and Luhya cultures which have been associated with the rapid spread of AIDS in the region.¹⁷ The Luo community does not traditionally practice male circumcision while the Luhya do circumcise males. In order to be perceived as a man, Luhya youth must undergo traditional circumcision initiation and belong to a named age group. Polygyny, or the practice of a man having more than one wife at the same time, is more widely practiced in Kisumu and Busia than in Nakuru. In Nakuru, widow remarriage has disappeared and circumcision of boys and girls, a common cultural feature among the Kikuyu, has shifted

¹⁶*Chira* is a Luo term for a body wasting illness believed to afflict people who break cultural taboos and also commonly used to police young Luo and Luyhia women.

¹⁷Ocholla-Ayayo, A.B.C., "HIV/AIDS risk factors and changing sexual practices in Kenya", in *African Families and the Crisis of Social Change*, eds. Thomas, S. Weisner, C. Bradley and P.L. Kilbride (Bergin & Garvey, USA: 1997), 109-124; Kenya P., S.A.Z. Mulindi, J. Onsongo and M. Gatei, *HIV/AIDS in Kenya: Situation Analysis* (National AIDS and STD Control Program, Ministry of Health: Nairobi, Kenya: 1998).

from the more traditional form of seclusion to the modern hospital environments.¹⁸ In the 1998 Kenya Demographic and Health Survey (KDHS), about a quarter of women participants in Nyanza Province reported having co-wives compared with 3 percent of women in Rift Valley Province. Similarly, 18 percent of men in Nyanza and Western Provinces and 3 percent in Central Province reported being in polygynous unions. The significance of the lineage system has declined markedly in Nakuru but it is a strong element of people's lives in Kisumu and Busia. Traditionally, the Kikuyu are a matrilineal society, in which the lineage is traced through female members of the family, though the husbands do not necessarily move to reside in the wife's home. Women in Nakuru have stronger control in reproductive decisions than men since children belong to the woman.¹⁹

In the 1998 KDHS, twice as many women in Nakuru province (2 percent) as in Nyanza (1percent) or Busia (1percent) reported marriage dissolutions perhaps reflecting differences in lineage systems. Women in Nakuru can also inherit property from their fathers or husbands.²⁰ In contrast, the Luo and Luhya, are patrilineal societies where the lineage system is drawn through male members. In a patrilineal society, married women must leave their families to live with their husbands'. Payment of bride wealth to the woman's family transfers the woman's reproductive capacities and other benefits from

¹⁸Neil Price, *The Value of Children amongst the Kikuyu of Central province, Kenya: An anthropological perspective on fertility* (Papers in International Development, University of Wales, Swansea, Wales: 1995), 13.

¹⁹Anastasia J. Gage and Wamucii Njogu, *Gender Inequalities and Demographic Behaviour: Ghana and Kenya* (The Population Council, New York: 1994).

²⁰Neil Price, *The Value of Children amongst the Kikuyu of Central province, Kenya: An anthropological perspective on fertility* (Papers in International Development, University of Wales, Swansea, Wales: 1995), 13.

her own lineage to that of the husband. Such a society might have higher rates of polygyny than others, suggesting that men are more dominating. In patrilineal societies, son preference for inheritance and continuation of the lineage line has a strong influence on the number of children a woman bears for her husband's family.²¹ Kiragu and Zabin observe that patrilineal societies in some parts of Africa condone premarital sexual relations for boys and not girls.²² Traditionally, Luo women do not inherit property, but rather, are inherited by the husband's family.²³

The Research Team

The research team comprised of the researcher, four young research assistants and two adult observers who stepped in as interviewers as the need arose. The research assistants were selected by the researcher, with input from ICD. The research assistant opportunities were communicated by word-of-mouth to the community in the three study sites, to local colleges and to all the workshop participants who were encouraged to submit a very basic application with set criteria. The selection criteria included good verbal and written command of Swahili and English languages, and a good command of at least one of the local languages in the study sites – Luo, Luyhia, Kikuyu; ages between eighteen to twenty five years old; and the commitment to stay on the study trail for approximately three months (May through July, 2006). Experience in conducting qualitative research in social sciences, and the ability to transcribe and translate

²¹Anastasia J. Gage. and Wamucii Njogu, *Gender Inequalities and Demographic Behaviour: Ghana and Kenya* (The Population Council, New York: 1994).

²²Kiragu, K and Zabin, L.S. *Contraceptive use among high school students in Kenya* (International Family Planning Perspective, 21 (3) 1995), 108-113.

²³Ocholla-Ayayo, A.B.C., *Traditional Ideology and Ethics among the Southern Luo* (The Scandinavian Institute of African Studies, Uppsala, Sweden: 1976).

interviews from local languages to English was not a criteria. Applications were received, reviewed and short-listed by ICD staff. Upon successful completion of a written and verbal quiz, the final applicants were interviewed and selected by the researcher and ICD staff. They included two high school graduates, Ivy Mokeira and Karis Kariuki, and two college students, Sarah Bukachi and Kevin Wang'oma, (two females and two males) all of whom had participated in the December 2005 workshop. They attended a one-week pre-research training session conducted by ICD and the researcher, but they still had some difficulties in comprehending the process of doing qualitative research, which was new to them. In addition to the researcher, three adult observers, Caro Congo, Hilda Odera and Val Achungo, were co-opted to work alongside the research assistants as moderators and note takers. The adult observers were assigned at the urging of ICD who were using the study as an opportunity to develop a pool of local researchers. This selection method partially met one of the key research objectives that provided youth with space to be the main actors in the research process, while working in partnership with relatively experienced adults and the requirements of ICD to involve the target population they serve.

Training the Researchers

Regional consultants from the December 2005 workshop in Nairobi trained the research team on how to conduct qualitative field research using the methods described above. During the training, emphasis was maintained on the study's overall objectives and on a clear understanding of the key concepts involved. The need was also stressed to obtain informed consent from each of the interviewees, and to give all the study participants the right to withdraw from the process at any stage. The researchers were

reminded of the importance of being sensitive throughout the interviews, and to discontinue them if they sensed that any of the interviewees were becoming distressed, irritated or uncooperative.

The training sessions explained the logic of using qualitative research methods and the importance of being subject-centered. To this end, the researchers were encouraged to pay particular attention to what their interviewees were saying.²⁴ The training focused on recognizing the interviewees' *unspoken* language: their emotional tones, their facial expressions, their physical disposition, how much or how little they spoke, whether they interrupted others, or how defensive they were. The researchers were urged to be highly gender sensitive, examining whether boys and girls performed differently during interviews – whether in mixed or single sex groups, or individually. The researchers were encouraged to form mixed teams of female and male, younger and older people, with varied experiences and fluency in the local languages – in order to iron out the differences with which interviewees naturally construct themselves with researchers of different ages and genders.

Throughout the training sessions, the consultants underscored the need to be sensitive to the particular environments in which the young interviewees were constructing their identities. Such environments would include not just schools, homes and community settings, but also the different gender compositions and sizes of each focus discussion group. The need to let the interviewees set the agenda and dictate both the pace and direction of the interviews was stressed, and the researchers were

²⁴L. M. Brown & C. Gilligan, *Meeting at the Crossroads: Women's Psychology and Girls' Development* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992); J.M. Taylor et al, *Between Voice and Silence: Women and Girls, Race and Relationship* (USA: First Harvard University Press, 1997).

encouraged to identify and pursue any pertinent points raised by the interviewees themselves.

Using simulated scenarios, the researchers practiced conducting different types of interviews, criticizing each other's performances, transcribing interviews, and comparing notes on each other's transcripts. This activity proved useful in raising awareness of the tendency to paraphrase what interviewees say, and thus to distort the interviewees' voices to reflect the researchers' own interpretations or opinions. The researchers also recognized how their efforts to keep up with questions in the interview guide could sometimes preclude them from listening to, or following up on issues raised by the interviewees. The researchers were encouraged to appraise their own influences on the data generating processes, and to end each interview by asking the interviewees for their opinions on the interview, if they had any questions, and whether it would have made a difference if the researcher had been a member of the opposite sex. Such questions will help to show how the interviewees were positioning themselves in relation to the interviewer as a particular man or woman, and how this affects the ways in which they presented themselves.

The one-week training was provided to the team to make the experience productive and relevant. Understanding the subject matter was crucial as it familiarized the team with the research tools and questions, ways of conducting focus group discussions and in-depth interviews, clarified the roles of the moderator, note taker, and observer; transcription and translation techniques, and the contents of the research questionnaires.

Data Collection

Fieldwork started in Busia, Nyanza and finalized with Nakuru. The researcher assisted by four research assistants two male and two female; two female moderators and a male note taker conducted the FGDs and IDIs. They were well acquainted with the local languages, in addition to being conversant in English and Swahili. FGDs were conducted in the mornings and in-depth interviews in the afternoons. This structure gave the researcher an opportunity to identify IDI participants based on their responses from the FGDs. Most FGDs averaged ten to eighteen participants. All interviews were tape-recorded and notes taken by the note taker to ensure that all discussion was captured. All FGDs and IDIs varied in length but generally took about one and a half to two hours for FGDs and forty five minutes to one and a half hours for IDIs.

Data Processing and Analysis

In an attempt to represent the voices of young people from Kenya, who participated in the study, extensive quotations from the interviews are used in the data analysis. The accounts of young people are not taken at face value, or simply as descriptions of themselves and the worlds they inhabit, but rather, as social constructions that provide readers with insights into the ways in which they actively produce their gendered and sexual identities, and their perceptions of being at risk for HIV/AIDS.

Qualitative research generates large amounts of textual data requiring a systematic method of segmenting the data into meaningful units or themes. Tape-recorded discussions were transcribed and translated verbatim into English. Both the moderators and note takers did the transcriptions and compared notes to ensure quality and consistency. The transcripts were then typed and thematic or content analysis was

undertaken. The analysis of qualitative data in the study was based on the concepts of Grounded Theory.²⁵ Themes that emerged during the discussions guided the analysis rather than the confines of formal gendered behavior models. Analysis involved developing a system of indexing the data into sets of categories that provided structure to the data based on the research objectives and the topics included in the question guides. Thus, each category represented a core topic or theme. Different levels of categories were developed to enrich the analysis process. For example, a youth code (e.g. sexual behavior) was developed and then sub-categories (e.g. premarital, extramarital, commercial) were used to represent different types of sexual behavior. QSR Nudi*st a qualitative software provided by ICD was used for textual data analysis.²⁶

The Research Questions

The study addressed the following research questions:

1. How do Kenyan youth construct their gendered identities and develop relationships between people of the same and opposite sex in different settings such as school, home and community?
2. How do these identities and relationships encourage or mitigate the spread of HIV/AIDS?

Chapter Overview

Chapter 1 provides background information, introduction to the study, its purpose, its significance, the rationale for the study providing details of how the research

²⁵ A. Strauss and J. Corbin, *Basics of Qualitative Research, Grounded Theory Procedures and Techniques* (Newbury, CA: Sage, 1990).

²⁶ QSR Nudi*st is a computer based qualitative software provided by ICD for the data analysis.

originated, the research methodology, data collection process and analysis to be used, the study sites, the research questions, and limitations of the study.

Chapter 2 focuses on the literature review of research conducted on youth from the global standpoint and in Africa. This chapter presents the theoretical framework from a historical and comparative perspective, redefining the social constructionist theory as applicable to this study, laying the foundation to support the need to conduct the study. Chapter 3 presents the findings from the study and provides the analysis and discussion of the research issues organized around ten interconnected themes. These themes are critical to the work ICD does with youth in these communities, and the researcher compares and contrasts trends both within and between sites, from single-sex and mixed-sex groups, as well as individual interviews. The findings draw, not only in the identities that particular boys and girls routinely construct and inhabit, but also the implications of these for the sorts of relations they forge with various categories of people, and their perceptions of risk towards HIV/AIDS.

Chapter 4 covers the summary, conclusion and recommendations for policy, future practice and research. The writing style of the paper – short paragraphs, brief to-the-point unsophisticated sentences, blunt honesty and candid reflections - very much reflects the thought processes, styles of speech and presentation of the Kenyan youth voices that the research bespeaks.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Nearly all contemporary research published on the identities of young people within a social constructionist framework has been undertaken in the West. The research has generally found that boys and girls tend to construct gender identities in opposition to each other, and that their differences are often structured and experienced as relations of power.²⁷ Frosh et al, for example, found that boys placed a strong emphasis on themselves as strong and active, while describing girls as weak and passive. The research study aims to discover whether African boys are equally concerned to construct their identities in such a manly way – in opposition to their perceptions of femininity – and, if so, how they do this.

Research on girls and the construction of femininities has suggested that girls often position themselves as mature and sensible in relation to boys, who they commonly regard as stupid, rude and irresponsible.²⁸ Indeed, in many western countries, girls usually outperform boys academically and the rates of delinquency are far higher among boys. It has been suggested that one reason for this is that boys, in identifying as boys,

²⁷Stephen Frosh, Ann Phoenix, and Robb Pattman, *Young Masculinities: Understanding Boys in Contemporary Society* (London: Palgrave, 2002); Barrie Thorne, *Gender Play: Girls and Boys in School* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1993); Becky Francis, *Oppositional Positions: Children's Construction of Gender in Talk and Role Plays Based on Adult Occupation* (Educational Research, 40, 1998), 31-43.

²⁸Valerie Walkerdine, *Sex, Power and Pedagogy* (London: Screen Education, 1981), 38.

are expected to be irresponsible. To be responsible is thus constructed as girlish. The researcher set out to discover whether there is any evidence of such perceptions in Kenya, and how they are manifested. Research among mature students in institutions of higher education in Kenya suggests that the men gain status by engaging in activities such as beer drinking and having multiple sexual relations, which they themselves construct as naughty and irresponsible. By comparison, women who engage in similar behavior are called derogatory names and are accused of violating culture.²⁹ Likewise, women who wear revealing clothes or go to popular nightspots – particularly if unaccompanied by a boyfriend – are accused of being too modern or western. Girls are also criticized for speaking too openly or often in class or in other contexts in which boys are present. Fear of being labeled in this way acts as a powerful means of social control, strongly restricting what young women say and do. The study aims to examine whether there is any evidence of this sort of policing of girls' identities – and how it affects the ways that they think and act.

While the use of the word *traditional* in contemporary African societies often refers to what are assumed to be pre-colonial values, as opposed to western ways of thinking and behaving, this study took the view that traditions are often invented, and that people construct what they define as traditional in relation to particular versions of what they call modern. The study was concerned with how young people, their parents and teachers create and categorize aspects of behavior and values as traditional or modern,

²⁹Robb Pattman, "The Beer Drinkers Say I had a Nice Prostitute but the Church Goers Talk About Things Spiritual – Learning to be Men at a Teachers' College in Zimbabwe" in *Changing Men in Southern Africa*, eds. Robert Morrell (Zed Press: 2001), 225-238; Robb Pattman, "Men Make a Difference: the Construction of Gendered Student Identities at the University of Botswana" in *Agenda No. 53, Special Issue on Education, Youth and HIV/AIDS*, 2002), 33-42; Gaidzanwa, R. "The Politics of the Body and the Politics of Control: An Analysis of Class, Gender and Cultural Issues in Student Politics at the University of Zimbabwe" In *Zambezia* 20: 1993), 15-33.

and how this reflects upon the ways that they construct their own identities as particular kinds of boys and girls, or men and women. In light of the AIDS pandemic, is there not a risk that certain practices and values are being idealized as traditional simply because they are different to western practices? Are young people being blamed – and blaming others – for imbibing western ideas about sexuality and gender? Do some boys and girls construct themselves as modern? If so, how does this manifest itself, and how is it different for boys and girls?

Research among young people in Botswana, in southern Africa, has found that boys tend to be happier about being boys than girls are about being girls.³⁰ In this research by Commeyras and Monti, young men and women aged between fourteen and twenty were asked to write an essay in response to the question, *“If you woke up tomorrow and found you were a member of the opposite sex, how would your life be different?”* Of the twenty five men who participated, only two provided positive responses to being girls. Most of the girls, in contrast, expressed a desire to change their sex for a day, in order to enjoy what they regarded as the freedoms afforded to men, such as being able to come home late at night, visit friends, and be relieved of household duties and responsibilities. The study aims to investigate further whether Kenyan girls and boys envy members of the opposite sex – and, if so, why as it relates to HIV/AIDS risk perception.

While there has been a great deal of research on the policing of girls and the tendencies for them to be labeled in derogatory ways and have their freedom curtailed, a

³⁰Commeyras, M and Montsi, M, “What If I Woke Up The Other Sex?” Botswana Youth Perspectives on Gender” (*Gender and Education*, Vol. 12, Number 3, 2000), 327-246.

few researchers and theorists have suggested that the identities of boys are also heavily policed.³¹ For example, it has been found that some boys attract teasing for being too effeminate or insufficiently masculine. Such boys are often referred to as gay or homosexual – not because they are presumed to be, but because the terms themselves are a symbol of effeminacy. These boys may be constructed as feminine for not playing football, for having too many girls as friends, for being sympathetic towards other boys, or even for working too hard. Fear of this kind of ridicule causes many boys to avoid developing close, supportive relationships with girls and with other boys. Instead, they feel compelled to maintain the appearance of a hard identity.³² The study aims to investigate whether, and to what degree, the identities of boys in Kenya are policed. What things do boys avoid doing for fear of being seen as too effeminate? Is this an accusation that Kenyan boys regularly face? Some gender theorists have advanced the idea that boys and men, as well as girls and women, can be oppressed and restricted by popular versions of masculinity.³³ According to Connell, men and boys are encouraged to aspire to a hegemonic masculinity, embodied by great physical strength and sexual prowess, which few, by definition, are able to attain. It means that most boys and men regularly feel frustrated, and many are picked upon for being subordinate and falling

³¹Sue Lees, *Losing Out: Sexuality and Adolescent Girls* (London: Hutchinson, 1986).

³²Debbie Epstein, "Boyz Stories: Masculinities and Sexualities in Schools", in *Masculinities in Education*, eds. C. Griffin and S. Lees (Special Issue, *Gender and Education*, 9: 1997), 105-114; Nayak A. and Mary Jane Kehily, "Playing it Straight: Masculinities, Homophobias and Schooling" in *Journal of Gender Studies* 5 (2): 1996, 211-230; Stephen Frosh, Ann Phoenix and Robb Pattman, *Young Masculinities: Understanding Boys in Contemporary Society* (London: Palgrave, 2002); Mac an Ghaill, M., *The Making of Men: Masculinities, Sexualities and Schooling* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1994).

³³Robert Connell, *Gender and Power: Society, the Person and Sexual Politics* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1987).

short of the hegemonic ideal. The study aims to examine what hegemonic ideals exist in Kenya, and how they can affect the identities and behavior of different types of boys. The study also looks for evidence of opposition to these ideals among boys, and what levels of frustration they may feel at being expected to live up to them.

Research in the West and in Africa suggests that men are feeling increasingly threatened for a variety of structural and ideological reasons, particularly increasing unemployment and the growth of feminist ideas.³⁴ In response to such trends, it has been argued, men are retreating into and clinging onto stereotypical macho identities. The theoretical perspective informing this study undermined the common sense view that masculinity is homogeneous, strong and self-contained. Yet, the study aimed to discover whether modern Kenyan boys feel threatened by assertive girls. How does the growing focus on girls' rights affect them?

The study aims to examine the kind of masculine and feminine identities commonly articulated by young people in Kenya. Gender is examined not as something that people are born with, which shapes their thoughts and behavior in passive, preordained ways, but as something that they construct themselves in interviews by inventing categories of masculinity and femininity and orienting themselves to them. The attempt to link attitudes to processes of gender identity construction can help us to understand not only why people hold particular views about sex and gender – views that may precipitate the spread of HIV/AIDS – but what they invest emotionally in these views. By focusing on how young people construct their identities in interviews, the

³⁴Robert Morrell, *Changing Men in Southern Africa* (London: Zed Press 2001); Margarette Silberschmidt, "Disempowerment of Men in Rural and Urban East Africa: Implications for Male Identity and Sexual Behavior" (*World Development*, Vol. 29, No. 4, 2002), 657-671.

study pays attention not only to what they say, but how they say it, and the emotions they express when talking about other boys, other girls and significant adults, and their relationships with them.

In researching the ways in which young people construct their identities, the researcher focused on them, not so much as authors of what they were saying – but as users and negotiators of certain positions made available to them by longstanding cultural discourses on gender. This is not to suggest that any of the interviewees were cultural dupes, identically manipulated by their past. Rather, a great deal of work and individual interpretation was and has been invested in the construction and enactment of their personal, social and sexual identities.

The study focuses on the lives and experiences of young people in Kenya, and, as agents who, willingly or unwillingly, see themselves as belonging to the socio-generational category of youth and the ways in which they seek to shape and unfold their lives in a positive manner. Rather than seeing youth as either a social or cultural entity in itself, or as a predefined life-stage, the researcher argues for an exploration of how youth position themselves and are positioned within generational categories. In studying young people, social scientists must conceptualize youth as both social being and social becoming; a position in movement. It is from the duality of being positioned and seeking one's own socio-generational position that this paper takes on the Kenyan youth perception of their risk towards HIV/AIDS. The youth provide in-depth analyses of the perceptions, positions, possibilities, and practices of diverse cultural groups of young people in Kenya.

Statement of the Problem

Studies have shown that, even at a very young age, boys construct girls and women as sex objects, sexualizing them (making them sexually appealing), eroticizing parts of their bodies in isolation of their personalities.³⁵ The assumption here is that sexual attraction is not simply instinctual, but that people construct certain characteristics and forms of behavior as sexually appealing, a practice that is often influenced by peers and by popular cultural representations of sexuality and gender. It seems likely that the male youth are influenced by and draw upon the proliferation of popular discourses and visual images that present women in such a way. By eroticizing women in this manner, many boys and men see themselves as possessing a powerful, even uncontrollable sex drive. The emphasis in many Kenyan societies on protecting young girls from boys is problematic, not only because it seriously restricts what girls can do, but because, ironically, it actively makes them the objects of boys' and men's desires, and precludes the possibility of non-sexual relations between boys and girls. Rather than adopting a purely traditional model of sexuality, which may lead people to assume that boys and men are naturally more sexually motivated than girls and women, the researcher would focus on how relations of power are produced by constructing males and females in this way.

The population of Kenya is approximately thirty four million with about 80 percent living in the rural areas. Kenya is characterized by a very young population, with almost 50 percent below the age of fifteen. The country has experienced one of the most rapid fertility declines in the recent past that has been largely attributed to increases in

³⁵Valerie Walkerdine, *Sex, Power and Pedagogy* (London: Screen Education, 1981), 38.

contraceptive use and improvements in other socio-economic aspects. The total fertility rate declined from about eight births per woman in 1978 to 4.9 in 2006 estimates. The population growth rate is estimated to have dropped from 3.8 percent in 1979 to about 2.5 percent in 2006. Contraceptive prevalence rate increased from 17 percent in 1984 to 39 percent in 2003. The decline in fertility and population growth rates was initially accompanied by a decline in mortality rates. However, these positive gains are currently being reversed by the increasing deaths attributed to AIDS. It is projected that by the year 2010, life expectancy will fall to about forty years in Kenya, meaning a loss of twenty years attributable to AIDS.³⁶

Moreover, the population projection indicates that AIDS will have reduced the population of Kenya by four million by the year 2010.³⁷ HIV/AIDS prevalence rates in Kenya have risen sharply since the 1990s, with up to 14 percent national prevalence rate in the adult population aged fifteen to forty nine years old in 2001 from 5 percent in 1990. HIV/AIDS prevalence rates have been invariably higher in urban than rural areas. The current estimates are 17 percent to 18 percent in urban areas and 12 percent to 13 percent in rural areas, although, the absolute number of people infected is larger in rural than urban areas since 80 percent of the population lives in rural areas.³⁸ The rising prevalence rates suggest that HIV prevention campaigns are not being translated into

³⁶James Trusell and B. Cohen. *Preventing and Mitigating AIDS in Sub-Saharan Africa: Research and Data* (Washington DC: National Academy Press, 1996); *AIDS in Kenya: Background, Projections, Impact, Interventions and Policy* (Nairobi: Government of Kenya/AIDS Control Unit, Ministry of Health, and National AIDS Control Council, 2001).

³⁷Central Bureau of Statistics, Government of the Republic of Kenya, Ministry of Planning and National Development, *Economic Survey* (Nairobi: Government Press, 1996).

³⁸Government of Kenya/AIDS Control Unit, Ministry of Health, and National AIDS Control Council, *AIDS in Kenya: Background, Projections, Impact, Interventions and Policy* (Nairobi: Government of Kenya/AIDS Control Unit, Ministry of Health, and National AIDS Control Council, 2001).

safer sexual behaviors and that there is a continuous increase in the number of people living with HIV. It also means that there is a high likelihood of encountering a sexual partner that is infected when levels of HIV prevalence are high because any sexually active individual linked in a sexual network with other non-monogamous men and women will be at high risk of infection themselves. The risk is even higher for adolescents initiating sexual activity. Heterosexual transmission accounts for about 80 percent of new infections hence, young people are at risk of getting the disease as soon as they initiate sexual activity.

Traditionally, amongst the Luo, Luhya and Kikuyu, virginity was the symbol that life had been preserved, that the spring of life had not been flowing wastefully, and that both the girl and her relatives had preserved the sanctity of human reproduction. A virgin bride was the greatest glory and crown to her parents, husband and relatives. Children are buds of society, and the birth of a child is, therefore, the concern not only of the parents but of many relatives including the living and the departed. Kinship plays an important role, so that a child cannot be exclusively my child but *our* child.

A major activity in the preparation of the young for their roles in society is the initiation rite. Initiation in the traditional society differed from one community to another. Generally, it was characterized by youth withdrawing from society, away from home, during which time the initiates received secret instructions. A great significance of the rites was to introduce the candidates to adult life. They were then allowed to share in the full privileges and duties of the community and to enter into the state of responsibility. They also inherited new rights, and new obligations as to what was expected of them by society.

Initiation is normally followed by communal celebration. Amongst the Luhya and Kikuyu, the boys' foreskin is cut off, and they are kept in seclusion until they are healed. In some communities, the girls undergo clitoridectomy, performed by the older women of the community. When their wounds heal, the girls can initiate sexual activity and get married. These young people, initiated together became mystically and ritually bound to each other for the rest of their life. They became one body, one group, one community, one people. They help one another in all kinds of ways. The wife of one man was equally the wife of other men (not sexually) in the same age-group.³⁹ The community played a large part in the maturation and sexual lives of youth. Today, communal responsibility over youth has dwindled in large part due to migration, urbanization, modernization and subsequent challenges such as HIV/AIDS.

Subsequently, the large number of young people entering their sexual and reproductive years are a potential AIDS reservoir of youth who should form a priority group for AIDS research and prevention activities because their behavior determines the future course of the AIDS epidemic.

The above, and the statistics presented earlier provide the rationale and importance for engaging in research on HIV/AIDS in Africa, particularly focusing on the voices of young people. As the title of this study suggests, there is an overwhelming silence about the role gender and sexuality play in the construction of identities of young people in Kenya, and their perceptions or knowledge of HIV/AIDS risk. Loewenson et al states:

³⁹John. S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy* (London: African Writers Series: Heineman, 1969).

In African cultures, the discussion of sexual issues is generally considered a sensitive subject. Parents cannot directly discuss sexual matters with their children. Studies found that rural and urban parents, even the professional community, feel that sexuality can only be discussed through a third party, who might be an aunt, an uncle or a grandparent.⁴⁰

The ways in which young people think and talk about themselves, their desires, concerns and relations with others, have not been featured in many studies, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa. When young people are addressed, it is often as passive beings subject to processes of socialization over which they have no control.⁴¹ Not only has research in Africa failed to address young people as active subjects, as cognitive people whose identities are constantly evolving in relation to others, it has also tended to group them together as impersonal subjects who are incapable of individual thought. As Mamadou Diouf suggests in his article:

... the subject of African youth, long ignored in the scholarly literature, has become a preoccupation of politicians, social and health workers, and for African communities albeit for different reasons. Youth as an analytic category of analysis has also come to the forefront of discourse among Africanist scholars of various and often diverse disciplines ... yet until very recently, young people and youth in Africa have been the "elephant in the room" to all but a handful of prescient, forward-thinking African scholars ... Even as Africa's children grew in numbers to constitute substantially more than half the continent's population, as an analytic focus and object of intellectual inquiry or discourse, people under twenty-five have been largely ignored.⁴²

The rationale for engaging in the study was to address this silence, and provide detailed and vital information about the cultures and identities of young people living in Kenya, and their perception towards HIV/AIDS risk, that could be used to develop

⁴⁰Robert Loewenson, & M. Chikamba, *Sexual abuse of children in Zimbabwe*, unpublished report, Harare: Training and Research Support Centre (Harare, Zimbabwe: 1994), 40.

⁴¹Osita Ogbu and Paschal Mihyo, *African Youth on The Information Highway – Participation and Leadership in Community Development* (Nairobi: IDRC, 2000).

⁴²Mamadou Diouf, "Engaging Postcolonial Cultures: African Youth and Public Space" *African Studies Review*, September 2003.

relevant, learner-centered and gender sensitive HIV/AIDS and life skills education from the perspective of the Kenyan youth.

The African Context

HIV/AIDS remains a crisis of unprecedented magnitude in sub-Saharan Africa. Of the 22 million deaths from AIDS since the epidemic broke out, almost eighty percent have occurred in Africa.⁴³ These have mostly been concentrated in eighteen countries that make up only five percent of the population of the world. AIDS has caused life expectancy rates in the affected countries in eastern and southern Africa to decline by over twenty years from already low levels.⁴⁴ In the last ten years, AIDS has been a more potent killer than all of the armed conflicts in Africa put together.⁴⁵ Of critical importance to the study, is that the AIDS epidemic is distinctive in the sense that it has been responsible for the orphaning of millions of African children, because, most of the lives it takes are of adults between twenty to forty years old – a parental age group. About twenty five million people are estimated to be living with HIV/AIDS in sub-Saharan Africa, of whom 3.8 million were infected in 2000 alone.⁴⁶ Millions of new infections each year among young adults guarantee that high rates of orphaning will continue for years to come.

⁴³U.N. Joint Program on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), Report on the Global HIV/AIDS Epidemic: June 2000 (Geneva: United Nations, 2000).

⁴⁴UNAIDS, AIDS Epidemic Update, December 2000: Graphics (Geneva: United Nations, 2000). The countries with the ten highest reported rates of HIV infection in the world as of June 2000 were Botswana (adult prevalence rate of 36 percent), Swaziland (25.2 percent), Zimbabwe (25.1 percent), Lesotho (23.6 percent), Zambia (20 percent), South Africa (20 percent), Namibia (19.5 percent), Malawi (16 percent), Kenya (14 percent), and Central African Republic (13.8 percent). See tables in UNAIDS, Report on the Global HIV/AIDS Epidemic: June 2000), 124.

⁴⁵UNICEF Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Office, *The Silent Emergency* (annotated presentation and fact sheets, Nairobi: 2000).

⁴⁶UNAIDS, *AIDS Epidemic Update, December 2000* (UNAIDS, Geneva, 2000).

Mostly because of the stigma of AIDS, it is impossible to count children orphaned by AIDS using sample surveys or censuses. Most of the available estimates are extrapolated from statistics on AIDS-related deaths and demographic assumptions, which differ somewhat between the two main sources of projections, the United Nations and the United States Bureau of the Census. The United Nations estimated that by the end of the year 2000 about thirteen million children under age fifteen years in sub-Saharan Africa would have lost their mother or both parents to AIDS.⁴⁷ The US Census Bureau estimates that there are currently about fifteen million children under age fifteen who have lost at least one parent to AIDS in Africa and that by 2010 this number will be about twenty eight million.⁴⁸ According to the US Census Bureau, by the year 2010, over 30 percent of all children under age fifteen will be orphans, largely due to AIDS, in five countries of eastern and southern Africa. By comparison, research suggests that in most developing countries about 2 percent of children under age fifteen were orphans before the era of AIDS.⁴⁹ Experts in the U.N. and the Census Bureau agree that "the HIV/AIDS pandemic is producing orphans on a scale unrivaled in world history," and that orphans as a percentage of the child population will continue to remain high in Africa for decades.⁵⁰ In heavily affected countries, for each child who has lost a parent to AIDS, there are one or two school age children who are caring for an ill parent, acting as breadwinners for the

⁴⁷UNAIDS, *Report on the Global HIV/AIDS Epidemic* (Geneva: UNAIDS, June, 2000), 27.

⁴⁸Susan Hunter and John Williamson, *Children on the Brink* (Washington, DC: U.S Agency for International Development, 2000).

⁴⁹UNAIDS and UNICEF, *Children Orphaned by AIDS: Frontline Responses from Eastern and Southern Africa* (New York: United Nations, 1999), 3.

⁵⁰Susan Hunter and John Williamson, *Children on the Brink*, Executive Summary: Updated Estimates and Recommendations for Intervention (Washington: USAID, 2000), 1.

household, or otherwise unable to attend school because of AIDS.⁵¹ Non-orphaned children are also affected when orphans are brought into their homes or, when they themselves are infected. Thus, AIDS-affected youth comprise a much larger population than just orphans.

The response of African governments to the AIDS epidemic has generally been grossly inadequate. Uganda, Kenya's neighbor to the west, is often cited as virtually the only African state in which government leaders recognized as early as the mid-1980s the threat of HIV/AIDS and acted to stop it. In 1986, spurred by outspoken leadership from President Yoweri Museveni, Uganda became the first country in Africa to collaborate with the World Health Organization Global Program on AIDS to create an inter-sectoral national AIDS control program.⁵² In 1993, the first hard evidence of declining transmission rates in Uganda was published, a time when heads of state in the rest of Africa were still silent about the problem or mentioned it only to blame others for bringing it into their countries. In spite of early action on the part of the Ugandan government, Uganda still has over 1 million children orphaned by AIDS, and the epidemic has claimed millions of lives, including 110,000 in 1999 alone.⁵³ This level of destruction is due to many factors, probably including the foothold that the epidemic already had in the country by 1986, the failure of even the greatest experts in the world at that time to understand its killing power, and the poverty and disintegration of social

⁵¹World Health Organization and UNICEF, *Action for Children Affected by AIDS: Program Profiles and Lessons Learned* (Geneva: United Nations, 1994), 5.

⁵²Mary Grace Alwano-Edyegu and Elizabeth Marum, *Knowledge is Power: Voluntary HIV Counseling and Testing in Uganda, UNAIDS Best Practice Series* (Geneva: UNAIDS, 1999).

⁵³UNAIDS, *Epidemiological Fact Sheet on HIV/AIDS and Sexually Transmitted Infections: Uganda* (Geneva: United Nations, 2000).

structures and basic services in Uganda following years of war. The successes in reducing rates of transmission in Uganda are most often attributed to the government's leadership and openness about the problem, the active role of civil society and religious leaders, and early donor support.

The extended family has traditionally been the source of support and care for orphans and young people in many African communities. It has become clear that the extended family is now overextended and unable to provide its traditional level of protection and care for children deprived of a family environment due to HIV/AIDS. "In the body, HIV gets into the defensive system and knocks it out. It does that sociologically too. It gets into the extended family support system and decimates it," according to Geoff Foster, a pioneer in research on children affected by AIDS in Zimbabwe.⁵⁴ Another researcher in Ethiopia has noted, the extended family, "a social safety net that accommodated orphaned children for centuries, is unraveling under the strain of AIDS."⁵⁵ Family unit breakdown begins with an immediate family member having AIDS. In studies by Carol Levine et al, once the AIDS symptoms appear, a parent becomes increasingly ill and unable to work.⁵⁶ The loss of that person's ability to work, bring in an income, combined with the financial burden of unaffordable medical treatments, most times, not involving any antiretroviral drugs, leads to problems of food insecurity and material need in the household. Youth are taken out of school either to

⁵⁴ Association Francois-Xavier Bagnoud, *Orphan Alert: International Perspectives on Children Left Behind by HIV/AIDS* (Boston: Association Francois-Xavier Bagnoud, 1999), 3.

⁵⁵ Ibid, 14.

⁵⁶ Carol Levine and Geoff Foster, *The White Oak Report: Building International Support for Children Affected by AIDS* (New York: The Orphan Project, 2000), 24-27.

care for the sick person in the household, to care for younger children, or to engage in income-generating activities. Increased poverty in the household means reduced access to health care services for all members, not just the person living with AIDS. Inheritance of the surviving wife, children, property, exacerbated stigmatization by the community and distant relatives leads to increased psychosocial distress.

The situation of youth affected by AIDS, as opposed to other conditions that result in orphans, was described succinctly by WHO and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) in 1994:

Other epidemics and disasters also cause death on a large scale and leave orphaned children, but the pattern of HIV/AIDS is unique. AIDS is a protracted problem, which does not allow the prospects of a return to normality. Those who should be caring and providing for children and the elderly are the ones who are dying. In the communities hardest hit, there are fewer and fewer able-bodied adults to produce crops or income or to care for children, who are often pushed into poverty. The survival of those already poor becomes even more precarious. The problems are further exacerbated by the fear and stigma of AIDS, which make other members of the community unwilling to help.⁵⁷

Many of the communities hardest hit by HIV/AIDS in Kenya have suffered from increased poverty, and the effects of widespread corruption. By the early 1990s, when the impact of AIDS began to be felt by the general population in most parts of Africa, community-level safety nets were already stretched. It is not surprising that caring for youth and caring for fellow children affected by AIDS poses a major challenge. As one group of AIDS experts noted at a UN international conference:

The number of orphans in countries with severe HIV/AIDS epidemics is already straining the ability of extended families and communities to absorb and provide for these children's needs. It is unclear how much coping can be expected of

⁵⁷Carol Levine and Geoff Foster, *The White Oak Report: Building International Support for Children Affected by AIDS* (New York: The Orphan Project, 2000).

families and communities. How much of the inevitable gap in support will be taken up by the state? And what can civil society, with the support of government and the international community, do to help? These are questions that must be faced in the next decade, and there are no easy answers.⁵⁸

In this study, several particular risks have been consistently noted in the selected three study sites that affect youth impacted by HIV/AIDS. Young people are a high-risk group for contracting HIV/AIDS, particularly if they do not have regular access to appropriate and clear information on HIV transmission and safe sex, as is the case in most of Kenya. Their risk is augmented when they are out of school, impoverished, on the street, or otherwise in circumstances that have been associated with the presence of AIDS in the family. The subordinate status of women and their inability in many circumstances to negotiate safer sex or resist coerced sex is yet another factor. In most of Africa, women and girls also face greater stigma than men in seeking services related to reproductive health and prevention and treatment of sexually transmitted infections.

Several quantitative studies have demonstrated that withdrawing young people from school appears to be a common coping mechanism for many African families affected by AIDS. A study in rural Zambia showed that 68 percent of orphans of school age were not enrolled in school compared to 48 percent of non-orphans.⁵⁹ In Zimbabwe, 48 percent of primary school age orphans dropped out of school, usually at the time of a parent's illness or death; while for secondary school, none of the youth stayed in school.⁶⁰ Another survey by the Farm Orphan Support Trust in 2000 estimated that one third of

⁵⁸Schwartlander, Benhard et al. *The Status and Trends of HIV/AIDS Epidemics in the World (MAP, Monitoring the AIDS Pandemic*, Veyrier du lac, France: 1998), 20.

⁵⁹UNAIDS and UNICEF, *Children Orphaned by AIDS: Frontline Responses from Eastern and Southern Africa* (New York: United Nations, 1999), 17.

⁶⁰UNAIDS, *Report on the Global HIV/AIDS Epidemic* (Geneva: June 2000), 28-29.

children orphaned by AIDS on commercial farms in Zimbabwe had dropped out because their families could no longer afford school fees.⁶¹ These direct risks of being removed from school are compounded for youth in AIDS-affected communities by the high death rate among teachers and school administrators that has been reported in many parts of Africa, dramatically weakening the capacity of schools to deliver educational services.

In many African countries, inheritance rights of AIDS widows and orphans have not been respected or protected.⁶² Although widows and orphans from other causes may also experience this so-called property grabbing, some observers have suggested that it is much worse when AIDS is in the picture. In Nyanza province in Kenya, a study noted that wife inheritance, a practice whereby a widow is inherited to be married to her husband's brother or another male relative, may contribute to property-grabbing in AIDS-affected families. When a man is betrothed, his family pays a bride price to his fiancée's family after which the woman and any children of the marriage are seen to belong to his family. If the man dies and his widow has AIDS or is suspected of being HIV-positive, his family members may consider it undesirable to inherit the widow and may rather consider themselves entitled to claim his property.⁶³ Closely related to partly being out of school and without property, the phenomenon of AIDS orphans swelling the numbers of

⁶¹Griffin Shea, "Future Bleak for Zimbabwe's Orphans" in *The Mail and Guardian* (Johannesburg, September 25, 2000).

⁶²WHO and UNICEF, *Action for Children Affected by AIDS: Programme Profiles and Lessons Learned* (Geneva: United Nations, 1994), 7; Association Francois-Xavier Bagnoud, *Orphan Alert: International Perspective on Children left behind by HIV/AIDS* (Boston: Association Francois-Xavier Bagnoud, 1999), 12-13.

⁶³WHO and UNICEF, *Action for Children Affected by AIDS: Programme Profiles and Lessons Learned* (Geneva: United Nations, 1994), 42.

homeless children in Africa has been noted in the popular press and expert reports alike. In Lusaka, the Zambian capital, the population of street children more than doubled from 1991 to 1999, an increase the U.N. agencies in the country attribute largely to AIDS.⁶⁴ Nongovernmental organizations have documented many risks to street children. A report by Save the Children Sweden confirms AIDS as an important part of what drives children to the streets and concludes, based on extensive interviews with service providers in Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, and Ethiopia that, for the most part, "an unprotected girl working on the streets will sooner or later end up working as a prostitute."⁶⁵ HIV/AIDS in Africa contributes to an increase in the population of street children, youth orphans living with poverty and stigma, children who have been deprived of their inheritance rights, and children with little prospect of realizing their right to education, all in need of special protection and intervention.

HIV/AIDS in Kenya

In Kenya, HIV/AIDS is a national emergency. An estimated 2.1 million adults and children live with HIV/AIDS, representing about fourteen percent of the sexually active population.⁶⁶ Kenya has the ninth highest HIV prevalence rate in the world.⁶⁷ UNAIDS estimates that about five hundred people died of AIDS each day in the country

⁶⁴UNAIDS and UNICEF, *Children Orphaned by AIDS: Front-line Responses from Eastern and Southern Africa* (New York: United Nations, 1999), 16.

⁶⁵Stefan Savenstedt, Gerd Savenstedt and Terttu Haggstrom, *East African Children of the Streets – a Question of Health* (Stockholm: Save the Children – Sweden, 2000).

⁶⁶National AIDS Control Programme (NASCO), *AIDS in Kenya: Background, Projections, Impact and Interventions*, 5th ed. (Nairobi: Ministry of Health, 1999).

⁶⁷UNAIDS, *Report on the Global HIV/AIDS Epidemic* (Geneva: June 2000), 124.

in 1999.⁶⁸ Many experts in Kenya now use the figure of six hundred deaths or more per day.⁶⁹ About seventy five percent of the deaths from AIDS in Kenya so far have occurred in young adults and adults aged eighteen to forty-five.⁷⁰ HIV/AIDS remains shrouded in denial and silence in much of Kenya, which complicates discussions of policy and legal measures to address the problem as well as the delivery of services to those affected.

HIV/AIDS has ravaged Kenya during a period of dramatic increases in the rate of poverty. In 1972, it was estimated that about 3.7 million Kenyans lived in poverty (defined as an income level of less than U.S. \$1 per day). Today that number is about fifteen million, or about 52 percent of the population.⁷¹ Nyanza Province, which has the highest rate of HIV infection in the country, about 29 percent, also records the highest poverty rate, 63 percent, whereas in the early 1990s it was among the least poor regions.⁷²

HIV/AIDS has contributed to the economic downturn in several ways. Agriculture employs about half the labor force in Kenya. In Nyanza Province alone, AIDS has reduced the workforce on agricultural estates by an estimated 30 percent.⁷³ In

⁶⁸UNAIDS, Epidemiological fact sheet on HIV/AIDS and Sexually Transmitted Infections – Kenya (Geneva: UNAIDS, 2000).

⁶⁹National AIDS Control Council official cited as saying that about 700 people die daily from the disease in Kenya, in Hannah Gakuo, "AIDS Awareness Project Launched" (Nairobi: *The Daily Nation* newspaper, May 3, 2001).

⁷⁰National Aids Control Programme (NAS COP), *AIDS in Kenya: Background, Projections, Impact and Interventions*, 5th ed. (Nairobi: Ministry of Health, 1999), 14.

⁷¹Government of the Republic of Kenya, *Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper 2000-2003* (Nairobi: Government Press, July 13, 2000).

⁷²NAS COP, *AIDS in Kenya: Background, Projections, Impact and Interventions*, 5th ed. (Nairobi: Ministry of Health, Paragraph 2:3, 1999).

⁷³*Ibid*, 32.

2000, The World Bank estimated that, an average corporation in Kenya paid the equivalent of 8 percent of its profits for AIDS-related costs such as worker absenteeism.⁷⁴ The Policy Project of Futures Group International estimates that the average rural smallholder household loses between 58 percent and 78 percent of its income following the death from AIDS of an economically active adult.⁷⁵ The loss suffered by urban households is in the same range. The death of a second adult results in the loss of an estimated 116 percent to 167 percent of household income, that is, households incur debt, forcing them to liquidate assets, withdraw children from school or send children away to live with relatives.⁷⁶ As in many countries, there is controversy in Kenya over the number of orphans. In 1999, the UN estimated that there were about 730,000 children under age fifteen in Kenya who had lost their mother or both parents to AIDS since the beginning of the epidemic, with about 550,000 of these children still living. A more recent estimate of about one million AIDS orphans currently living in the country has been widely accepted. In 2005, The Kenya National AIDS and Sexually Transmitted Disease Control Program (NASCOP) estimated that there would be 1.5 million orphans under age fifteen by 2010, largely due to AIDS.⁷⁷ Social services, including those on which children rely, are gravely affected by HIV/AIDS in Kenya. The Teachers Service Commission estimates a national shortage of about 14,000 teachers at the primary and

⁷⁴Ibid, 31.

⁷⁵Lori Bollinger, John Stover, and David Nalo, *The Economic Impact of AIDS in Kenya* (Washington, DC: Futures Group International, 1999), 4.

⁷⁶Ibid, 4.

⁷⁷NASCOP, *AIDS in Kenya: Background, Projections, Impact and Interventions*, 5th ed. (Nairobi: Ministry of Health, 1999), 24.

secondary levels, attributable in large part to AIDS deaths among teachers.⁷⁸

According to a high-level Ministry of Education official interviewed by Human Rights Watch, a school in Kenya might easily have seven of eighteen teaching positions vacant because of attrition due to AIDS.⁷⁹ The care and treatment needs of persons with AIDS have overwhelmed health services in some parts of the country, causing reduced access to services generally, including basic child health and survival services.⁸⁰ One study estimated that by 2000 expenditures made to care for AIDS patients in government health facilities were about the equivalent of the entire 1993-94 Ministry of Health budget.⁸¹ It is only recently under pressure from nongovernmental organizations, that the Kenyan government has begun to take measures to improve access to antiretroviral drugs for the vast majority of persons with AIDS in the country for whom these drugs are unaffordable. In June 2001, over stiff opposition by pharmaceutical companies, the Kenyan Parliament passed the Industrial Properties Bill, which allowed the country to import and manufacture generic antiretroviral drugs.⁸² Girls are especially affected by the AIDS epidemic in Kenya. The rate of HIV infection in girls and young women from fifteen to nineteen years old is about six times as high as that of their male counterparts in

⁷⁸Kariuki Waihenya, "Teacher Shortage Biting" (*The Daily Nation* newspaper, April 16, 2001).

⁷⁹Human Rights Watch Interview with Hon. Mr. W.K.K. Kimalat, Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Education (Nairobi: March 5, 2001).

⁸⁰NASCOP, *AIDS in Kenya, Background, Projections, Impact and Interventions*, 5th ed. (Nairobi: Ministry of Health, 1999), 26.

⁸¹*Ibid* 27.

⁸²Reuters, *Kenya's Parliament Passes AIDS Drugs Bill* (Reuters, June 12, 2001).

the most heavily affected regions, a pattern seen in many African countries.⁸³

Although there are biological reasons why HIV transmission in this age group may be more efficient from male to female than in the opposite direction, biological reasons alone cannot account for a disparity this great. Several observers conclude that girls in this age group are contracting the virus from older men, in many cases as a result of sex in which they engage for sheer economic survival.⁸⁴ Out of every five Kenyan girls, one reports that her first sexual experience is coerced or forced.⁸⁵ Girls are more readily pulled out of school when someone in the household is ill with AIDS. Kenyan Ministry of Education figures show that after four years of primary school in heavily AIDS-affected Nyanza Province, girls make up only 6 percent of those who are promoted to grade five.⁸⁶ In Eastern Province, which has the lowest rate of HIV prevalence of the Kenyan provinces, 42 percent of those passing into fifth grade are girls. The permanent secretary of the Ministry of Education attributed these disparities to AIDS and also noted that girls and boys passed through to grade five in roughly equal numbers twenty years ago before the epidemic's impact was felt.⁸⁷ A recent detailed study carried out by the nongovernmental organization *Population Communication Africa* found out that of

⁸³NASCOP, *AIDS in Kenya: Background, Projections, Impact and Interventions*, 5th ed. (Nairobi: Ministry of Health, 1999), 11.

⁸⁴Tony Johnston and Wairimu Muita, *Adolescent Love in the Time of AIDS: A Kenyan Study* (Nairobi: Population Communication Africa, 2001), 48-52. This report notes that so-called sugar daddies are an important phenomenon and are not necessarily as old as middle age but are old enough to have some kind of income.

⁸⁵Tony Johnston, *The Adolescent AIDS Epidemic in Kenya: A Briefing Book*, rev. ed. (Nairobi: Population Communication Africa, 2000).

⁸⁶Human Rights Watch interview with Hon. Mr. W.K.K. Kimalat, Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Education, Nairobi, March 5, 2001.

⁸⁷*Ibid.*

seventy two children orphaned by AIDS on Rusinga Island in western Kenya, girls from AIDS-affected households were less likely to be in school than boys.⁸⁸

Wife inheritance is widely practiced among some groups in Kenya, particularly the Luo in the national AIDS epicenter of Nyanza Province. This practice, whereby a widow is taken in marriage by the brother or other male relative of her deceased husband, traditionally provided protections to the widow and her children who might otherwise find themselves bereft of the social and economic support of a family. In the era of HIV/AIDS, however, some government and community leaders have criticized wife inheritance as a means of spreading HIV. A study of AIDS-affected families on Rusinga Island concluded that, "wife inheritance . . . is losing its former popularity due, perchance, to the risk of AIDS infection" but found that 77 percent of women widowed by AIDS still remarried, of whom half were inherited by the brothers of their husbands.⁸⁹

Many studies, using both quantitative and qualitative methods have looked at the sexual behavior of Kenyans.⁹⁰ Data is also regularly collected by UNAIDS, and routine

⁸⁸Tony Johnston, Alan Ferguson, and Caroline Akoth, *A Profile of Adolescent AIDS Orphans* (Nairobi: Population Communication Africa, 1999).

⁸⁹Stephen Buckley, "Wife Inheritance Spurs AIDS Rise in Kenya," (*The Washington Post*, November 8, 1997); John Oywa, "Stop Widow Rituals, Says PC" (*The Daily Nation* newspaper, Nairobi: March 24, 2001).

⁹⁰Charles Nzioka, "Perspectives of adolescent boys on the risks of unwanted pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections: Kenya", *Reproductive Health Matters* (9 (17), 2001), 108-117; Evasius K. Bauni and B.O. Jarabi, "Family Planning and Sexual Behaviour in the era of HIV/AIDS: The Case of Nakuru district in Kenya", *Studies in Family Planning*, (31(1), 2000), 69-80; Futures Group Europe, *A Report on Focus group findings on the sexual behaviour of young people in Mbita, Nyanza* (Nairobi, Kenya: 1999); J.D.F Habema et al, *Preliminary results of a study on sexual behaviour of young adults, commercial sex workers and their clients in Nyanza Kisumu, Kenya* (1999); B.M Fapohunda and Naomi Rutenberg, *Expanding Men's Participation in Reproductive Health in Kenya* (The Population Council, African Population Policy Research Center: Nairobi, Kenya, 1999); Achola Ndinya et al, "HIV prevalence, low condom use and gender differences in sexual behaviour among patients with STD related complaints at a Nairobi primary health care clinic (*International Journal of STD/AIDS*, (8 (8), 1997), 506-514; Gary K. Barker and Susan Rich, "Influences on adolescent sexuality in Nigeria and Kenya: Findings from recent focus group discussions" (*Studies in Family Planning* (23 (3), 1992), 199-210; Ayo Ajayi et al,

sentinel surveillance in hospitals and Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STD) clinics in Kenya. All these sources of data point to the prevalence of risky sexual behavior and the heightened risk of HIV infection among young people. Young people are more likely to have multiple sexual partners, to perceive of themselves as low risk for HIV infection and to use condoms irregularly. The sentinel surveillance data collected indicates striking age and sex differences in infection levels. Infection rates are generally higher for young women than young men, but the reverse occurs for older men and women. About 75 percent of the AIDS cases occur in the age group twenty to forty five years, peaking at ages twenty five to twenty nine years for females and thirty to thirty four years for males. Young women in the age group fifteen to twenty four years are two to three times more likely to be infected than males in the same age range. More AIDS cases occur in children under five years than in age group five to fourteen, probably because most of them are infected through their mothers.⁹¹

Since 1987, The Kenyan government, international and local non-governmental organizations and development partners (World Bank, DfID, USAID and UNAIDS), have been addressing the major challenge of HIV/AIDS to the country's development or lack thereof. The current president Hon. Mwai Kibaki declared AIDS a national disaster. The AIDS campaigns in Kenya emphasize change in sexual behavior (abstinence, condom use, monogamy and reduction of sexual partners). Indeed, the Kenya Demographic and Health Surveys (KDHS) of 1993 and 1998 show high awareness of

"Adolescent sexuality and fertility in Kenya: A survey of knowledge, perceptions, and practices (*Studies in Family Planning* (22 (4), 1991), 205-216.

⁹¹NASCOP, *AIDS in Kenya: Background, projections, interventions and policy*, Government of Kenya/AIDS Control Unit (Nairobi: Ministry of Health, and National AIDS Control Council, 2001).

AIDS. Over 99 percent of respondents were aware of AIDS in 1998.⁹² Similarly, over 96 percent of both women and men knew that AIDS could be transmitted through sexual intercourse. In addition, over 80 percent know that HIV can be transmitted from mother to child and that a healthy looking person can have the AIDS virus.

According to the KDHS of 1993 and 1998, the number of people with misconceptions about AIDS had decreased over the years. In 1998, only 8 percent gave incorrect responses when asked about modes of transmission, while in 1993 over 50 percent did so. Similarly, the number of people who reported that they knew someone ill from or who had died of AIDS increased from 4 percent in 1993 to over 70 percent in 1998, thus reflecting the advancement of HIV/AIDS spread in Kenya.

Although ignorance is no longer the issue in Kenya, attitudes and behavior changes are. Feelings of vulnerability and risky sexual practices are rife among different population subgroups. In the 1998 KDHS, about a third of both women and men felt they were not at risk of HIV/AIDS. Risky sexual behavior persists even though there is high knowledge of AIDS. In the same survey, 16 percent and 60 percent of married and unmarried men respectively, reported having more than one sexual partner in the twelve months before the survey. For women, the proportions were 2 percent and 40 percent for married and unmarried respectively. About 7 percent of married men with extramarital partners reported having had two or more sexual partners in the last year while less than one per cent of married women reported the same. Comparably, 50 percent and 14

⁹²National Council for Population and Development (NCPD), Central Bureau for Statistics (CBS) and Macro International Inc. (MI), *Kenya Demographic and Health Survey Report of 1998* (Nairobi: National Council for Population and Development, Central Bureau of Statistics and Macro International Inc, 1999).

percent of the sexually active unmarried men and women respectively reported having had two or more sexual partners in the last year before the survey. The differences indicate that Kenyan men are more likely than women to engage in extramarital sexual relations or to have multiple sex partnerships, thus they are more at risk of contracting HIV and infecting their partners.

Importantly, condom use is low in Kenya and is confined mostly to only certain types of sexual liaisons, although use is common with the non-regular than with regular partners of many individuals. In the 1998 KDHS 7 percent of men and 3 percent of women reported condom use among spouses respectively, compared to about 42 percent of men and 15 percent of women engaging in sexual relations outside of marriage. Low use of condoms in extramarital relations heightens the risk of HIV and classical STDs in conjugal unions that would otherwise reduce risk if partners were faithfully monogamous. It remains unclear how knowledge of AIDS is translated into safer sexual behavior at the community and individual levels. It is also not clear how perception of risk influences or is influenced by sexual behavior as the association between the two variables can work both ways. The strong influence of the socio-cultural environment may explain the observed inconsistency between what Kenyan people claim to know, their beliefs and risk-taking behavior associated with increased risk of HIV infection. The HIV/AIDS challenges confronting Kenya are rising as the 2003 UNAIDS Table 1 below illustrates the vastness of the impact of the epidemic and the urgent need to reduce transmission rates.

Table 1. HIV/AIDS Prevalence Statistics for Kenya – Source: UNAIDS, 2004

Adults age 15 – 49 with HIV/AIDS	1,100,000
Adult prevalence (percent)	6.7
Women age 15 – 49 with HIV/AIDS	720,000
Children with HIV/AIDS	100,000
AIDS orphans (ages 0 – 17)	650,000
AIDS deaths	150,000

The first case of HIV was diagnosed in Kenya in 1984, but concrete response on the part of the government came only years later.⁹³ The British government Department for International Development (DFID), noted that "Kenya has been notoriously slow to admit to its HIV/AIDS problem, to see it without an ethnic focus and to demonstrate high-level political commitment."⁹⁴ The first national policy statement on AIDS came with the Kenyan parliament's adoption of its Sessional Paper no. 4 in 1997, which made recommendations for program implementation. In November 1999, the then president, Daniel arap Moi declared HIV/AIDS a national disaster, his first major public statement on the subject.⁹⁵ By then, an estimated one in every nine sexually active persons in the

⁹³NASCOP, *AIDS in Kenya: Background, Projections, Impact and Interventions*, 5th ed. (Nairobi: Ministry of Health, 1999), 2.

⁹⁴Government of the United Kingdom, Department for International Development, Health and Population Department, "HIV/AIDS in Kenya - How Political Commitment Can Make a Difference" *Stories from the Field Series* (London: Government of the United Kingdom, April 2001).

⁹⁵Rosalind Russell, *Kenya Calls AIDS National Disaster, Bars Condoms News Alerts* (Reuters News Media, November 30, 1999).

country was already infected. At about the same time, the government established an inter-ministerial National AIDS Control Council (NACC) to develop strategies for controlling the spread of the disease.⁹⁶

It is difficult to put a monetary figure on the Kenyan government's expenditures on HIV/AIDS because government-funded programs in many sectors touch directly or indirectly on the disease and its consequences. The government's most recent medium-term plan for dealing with HIV/AIDS proposes a budget of U.S. \$30.7 million in government funds over five years.⁹⁷ The government recently reported to the Kenyan parliament that it had allocated 140 million shillings, or about U.S. \$1.87 million, for HIV/AIDS programs in the current fiscal year and that Kenya had received pledges of 7.6 billion shillings, or about U.S. \$100 million, from various donors to continue AIDS work in the coming years; much of this aid is to be channeled through non-governmental organizations rather than the government.⁹⁸ The World Bank recently announced a loan on concessionary terms for U.S. \$50 million over four years to combat AIDS.⁹⁹ British official assistance in the area of HIV/AIDS was recently increased to 550 million shillings (\$7.3 million) for the year with about \$37 million pledged over five years.¹⁰⁰ While external donors have recently been very responsive in the area of HIV/AIDS, in

⁹⁶Government of United Kingdom, Department for International Development, Health and Population Department, *HIV/AIDS in Kenya - How Political Commitment Can Make a Difference - Stories from the Field Series* (London: Government of the United Kingdom, April 2001), 1.

⁹⁷NASCOP, *AIDS in Kenya* (Nairobi: Ministry of Health, 2005), 54.

⁹⁸Odhiambo Orlale, "Sh 7.6 Billion Pledged for Fight Against AIDS" *The Daily Nation* newspaper, April 18th, 2001.

⁹⁹Ibid.

¹⁰⁰"UK Raises AIDS Funds to Kenya" *The Daily Nation* newspaper, April 19th, 2001.

the last several years some donors and lenders, notably the International Monetary Fund and World Bank, have withdrawn their assistance to Kenya because of allegations of corruption and other concerns.¹⁰¹

While the literature on adolescent sexuality in developing countries tends to be quantitative and limited in focus, this is not the case in developed countries, where much more work has been done on the broader context of sexual behavior. There are many ways in which the social construction of sexuality might predispose young people to poor sexual health. Four themes dominate this literature and form the starting point for this study in the African context. These themes encompass female sexuality (in particular conflict between sexual feelings and social norms), gendered power imbalances, features of male sexuality, and peer norms and values. The sexuality of young people has enjoyed less attention in literature emanating from developing countries, although the limited work conducted is discussed below.

Despite some notable exceptions this literature often tends to refer to adolescents as a homogenous group and to make sweeping generalizations about their sexuality.¹⁰² Aggleton criticizes this literature for failing to take account of wide variations in the sexuality of young people, arguing that such generalizations have played a key role in

¹⁰¹"Kenya's Moi Lashes Donors on Corruption," *The Mail and Guardian* newspaper, (Johannesburg: February 14th, 2001).

¹⁰²Janet Holland, Caroline Ramazanoglu, Sue Scott, Sue Sharpe & Rachel Thomson, *Sex, gender and power: Young women's sexuality in the shadow of AIDS* (Sociology of Health and Illness, 12, 1990), 336-350; _____. "Between embarrassment and trust: Young women and the diversity of condom use", In P. Aggleton, P. Davies, & G. Hart, *AIDS: Responses, interventions and care* (London: Falmer Press, 1991), 127-148; _____. "Pleasure, pressure and power: Some contradictions of gendered sexuality" in *The Sociological Review*, 40 (1992), 645-674; _____. "Achieving masculine sexuality: young men's strategies for managing vulnerability" In L. Doyal, J. Naidoo, & T. Wilton, *AIDS: Setting a feminist agenda*, (Southport: Taylor & Francis, 1994a), 122-148.

undermining the success of sexual health promotion among youth.¹⁰³ He indicates that simplistically generalized views of adolescent sexuality held by adults, have influenced policy and practice so that young people do not receive the knowledge and services they require.

Research on the broader context of sexual behavior has been particularly concentrated on the contradiction between social norms of female sexuality and the sexual feelings of young women, highlighting the danger in which young women place their sexual health when adhering to social norms.¹⁰⁴ A high regard for the preservation of reputation means that young women adhere to social definitions of sexual encounters as initiated by men, against female resistance. Women, therefore, often do not have condoms available and make few efforts to gain knowledge of their partners' sexual histories, as this would be tantamount to admitting to themselves and society that they plan to engage in sex. In addition, women often avoid being associated with women who actively seek sex.¹⁰⁵ Social pressures encourage young women not to engage in sex but those that do are expected to do so in the confines of serious and trusting relationships.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰³Peter Aggleton, *Success in HIV Prevention* (Horsham: AVERT, 1997).

¹⁰⁴Janet Holland et al, "Desire, risk and control: The body as a site of contestation" In L. Doyal, J. Naidoo, & T. Wilton, *AIDS: Setting a feminist agenda* (Southport: Taylor & Francis, 1994b), 61-79.

¹⁰⁵Janet Holland et al, "Sex, gender and power: Young women's sexuality in the shadow of AIDS", *Sociology of Health and Illness*, 12 (1990), 336-350; Lynne Hillier, Lyn Harrison & Deborah Warr "When you carry condoms all the boys think that you want it: Negotiating competing discourses about safe sex" *Journal of Adolescence*, 21, (1998), 15-29.

¹⁰⁶Janet Holland et al, "Sex, gender and power: Young women's sexuality in the shadow of AIDS", *Sociology of Health and Illness*, 12 (1990), 336-350.

This emphasis on serious relationships encourages premature trust of partners and therefore the non-use of condoms.¹⁰⁷

Literature on the sexuality of young people in developed countries has highlighted imbalances in gender power that prevent young women from negotiating safe sexual encounters.¹⁰⁸ Social constructions of masculinity that promote the idea of men needing sex further constrain women's negotiation potential by limiting opportunities for women to either refuse sex or negotiate safe sex.¹⁰⁹ Holland et al. indicate that many of the young women interviewed for their study in Manchester and London had experienced sexual initiation through coercion and force.¹¹⁰ While society does not accept male violence as a matter of course, the social construction of male and female sexualities in Western culture frequently blur the distinction between male violence, coercion or rape and normal heterosexual sex. The researchers emphasize that not all men or women conform to these norms. As the study will seek to highlight in its findings, a minority of

¹⁰⁷Janet Holland et al, "Between embarrassment and trust: Young women and the diversity of condom use" In P. Aggelton, P. Davies, & G. Hart, *AIDS: Responses, interventions and care* (London: Falmer Press, 1991), 127-148; Ingham, R., Woodcock, A., & Stenner, K. "Getting to know you . . . young people's knowledge of their partners at fist intercourse" *Journal of Community and Applied Social Psychology*, 1 (1991), 117-132.

¹⁰⁸Janet Holland, "Pleasure, pressure and power: Some contradictions of gendered sexuality", *The Sociological Review*, 40 (1992), 645-674.

¹⁰⁹Wilton, T, & Peter Aggleton, "Condoms, coercion and control: heterosexuality and the limits to HIV/AIDS education" In P. Aggelton, P. Davies, & G. Hart, *AIDS: Responses, interventions and care*, (London: Falmer Press, 1991), 149-156; Moore, S., & Rosenthal, D. "The social context of adolescent sexuality: Safe sex implications" *Journal of Adolescence*, 15 (1992), 415-435; Ramazanoglu, C., & Holland, J., "Women's sexuality and men's appropriation of desire" In C. (e.), Ramazanoglu, *Up against Foucault: Explorations of some tensions between Foucault and Feminism* (London: Routledge, 1993), 239-264.

¹¹⁰Janet Holland et al, "Between embarrassment and trust: Young women and the diversity of condom use" In Peter Aggelton, Davies, & G. Hart, *AIDS: Responses, interventions and care* (London: Falmer Press 1991), 127-148.

young men and women define their sexuality outside of the norms constructed by society and in so doing, challenge traditional/normative social constructions of relationships.¹¹¹

There is also a growing research literature concerned with male sexuality. Masculine sexuality is manifest in society's classification of normal men as being associated with multiple partners and power over women. Tension develops between the emotional vulnerabilities of young men and the behavior that they are expected to adopt in order to be accepted as masculine in society.¹¹² The need for men to engage in multiple sexual relationships combined with internalized negative attitudes towards condoms place their sexual health at risk. Health interventions have frequently encouraged young people to use condoms or to know their partners.¹¹³ Among all young people, but young men in particular, there is the perception that they can filter out partners dangerous to their health. Partners can therefore be categorized as clean or unclean based on their social interactions and appearance so that decisions about making use of condoms can be made.¹¹⁴

¹¹¹Janet Holland, "Sex, Gender and Power: Young women's sexuality in the shadow of AIDS" *Sociology of Health and Illness*, 12, 91 (1990), 336-350; _____. "Pleasure, pressure and power: Some contradictions of gendered sexuality" *The Sociological Review*, 40, (1992), 645-674.

¹¹²MacPhail, C., & Catherine Campbell, "Evaluating HIV/STD interventions in developing countries: Do current indicators do justice to advances in intervention approaches?" *South African Journal of Psychology*, 29 (1999), 149-165; Janet Holland et al, "Desire, risk and control: the body as a site of contestation" In L. Doyal, J. Naidoo, & T. Wilton, *AIDS: Setting a feminist agenda* (Southport: Taylor & Francis, 1994b), 61-79.

¹¹³Janet Holland et al, "Sex, gender and power: Young women's sexuality in the shadow of AIDS", *Sociology of Health and Illness*, 12 (1990), 336-350; Wight, D, "Boys' thoughts and talk in a working class locality of Glasgow", *Sociological Review*, 42 (1994), 703-737.

¹¹⁴Cathy Waldby, Susan Kippax, & June Crawford, "Cordon Sanitaire: Clean and unclean women in the AIDS discourse of young heterosexual men" In P. Aggleton, *AIDS: Facing the second decade*, (London: Falmer Press, 1993), 29-39.

All groups are particularly influenced by the norms of their peers. This is especially true of young people and has been well documented in the literature regarding sexual behavior.¹¹⁵ Studies with American college students have shown that discussions of safe sex within friendships were a strong predictor of practicing safer sex.¹¹⁶ Gender differences in the impact of peers were however found, with females being more likely to morally pressure their friends than their male equivalents. Although these examples indicate that peer norms assist in the adoption of safe sexual behavior, they have also indicated that in the majority of cases peer norms encourage risk.¹¹⁷ They indicate that peer norms function to promote unsafe sexual behavior and to encourage concern about sexual health to be viewed in a negative light. Peer education stems from the belief that well-liked and respected peers may be able to encourage others towards behaviors that promote HIV prevention rather than the high-risk behaviors usually associated with peer norms.¹¹⁸

This surge of research concerning the various dimensions of adolescent sexuality in the west has not been matched in developing countries. To date, the majority of work in developing countries has examined narrow variables of knowledge, attitudes and behaviors with the assumption that sexuality and sexual behavior fall within the ambit of

¹¹⁵Reed, D., & Weinberg, M, Premarital Coitus: Developing and establishing sexual scripts, *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 47 (1984), 129-138.

¹¹⁶Dana Lear, "Sexual communication in the age of AIDS: The construction of risk and trust among young adults", *Social Science and Medicine*, 41 (1995), 1311-1323.

¹¹⁷Jeffrey Fisher, Misovich, S., & William Fisher, "Impact of perceived social norms on adolescents' AIDS-risk behaviour and prevention" In R. DiClemente, *Adolescents and AIDS: A generation in jeopardy* (Newbury Park: Sage, 1992), 117-136.

¹¹⁸Julliane Serovich, & Greene, K, "Predictors of adolescent sexual risk taking behaviours which put them at risk for contracting HIV", *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 26 (1997), 429-444.

rational decision making by individuals.¹¹⁹ In most instances, empirical research findings have concentrated on age at first sex, number of partners, awareness of condoms and knowledge about HIV.¹²⁰ While this information is frequently used to indicate the relative success of HIV-intervention programs, the multi-dimensional context in which adolescent sexuality is constructed and negotiated is frequently not addressed.¹²¹

Historically, African literature on issues relating to teenage sexuality has concentrated on adolescent pregnancy and contraception use.¹²² More recently, however, there has been a trend towards an expanded focus to consider the broader social and community contexts in which young people negotiate their sexuality. Richter and Swart-Kruger indicate the importance of the social and economic contexts in which street children negotiate their sexuality.¹²³ They show that for individuals such as street children, there are limited opportunities to exercise control over their sexual encounters. In certain respects, research findings on condom use by South African youth are similar to research findings with youth in developed countries. For example, research by Preston-Whyte et al;

¹¹⁹Fife-Shaw, C, "Commentary on Joffe (1996) AIDS research and prevention: A social representation approach", *British Journal of Medical Psychology*, 70 (1997), 65-73.

¹²⁰Flisher, J., Ziervogel, C., Chalton, D., Leger, P., & Robertson, B, "Risk-taking behaviour of Cape Peninsular high school students: Part VIII. Sexual behaviour", *South African Medical Journal*, 83 (1993), 495-497; Richter, L., Swart-Kruger, J., & Barnes, J, "Street children and youth in South Africa: AIDS-related knowledge, attitudes and behaviour" In B. Grannon (ed.), *Children and youth at risk: HIV/AIDS issues, residential care and community perspectives*, (Cape Town: NACCW, 1994); Richter, L., & Swart-Kruger, J, "AIDS-risk among street children and youth: Implications for intervention", *South African Journal of Psychology*, 25 (1995), 28-31.

¹²¹MacPhail, C, "Adolescents and HIV in developing countries: New research directions", *Psychology in Society*, 24 (1998), 69-87.

¹²²Kau, M, "Sexual behaviour and contraceptive use by adolescent pupils in the Republic of Bophuthatswana", *Curationis*, 11 (1988), 9-11.

¹²³Linda Richter, & Jill Swart-Kruger, "AIDS-risk among street children and youth: Implications for intervention", *South African Journal of Psychology*, 25 (1995), 28-39.

highlight the way in which the use of condoms is seen to militate against young men's notions of masculinity and pleasure.¹²⁴ In addition, Abdool Karim et al. have illustrated that young people continue to view the use of condoms as only necessary among those already infected with STDs or HIV. However, in other instances the factors constraining the use of condoms among African youth have been quite different to what has been documented in developed countries. Preston- Whyte et al. point to the importance of fertility for young men, and therefore young men's opposition to condom use, purely due to their contraceptive value.¹²⁵

In relation to our particular interest in adolescent sexuality in the context of power relationships, the most promising literature in the African context has been the emergence of a distinct body of African literature on the incidence of violence and coercion experienced by young women and the impact that this may have on the adoption of safe sex.¹²⁶ However, despite such positive developments in African research, there has been a tendency to focus entirely on stereotypical norms of gender and sexuality without considering the ways in which some young people transform or contradict stereotypes.

The study has already referred to Aggleton's critique of the tendency among researchers to consider young people as a homogenous group without taking intra-group

¹²⁴Preston-Whyte, E., & Zondi, M, "Adolescent sexuality and its implications for teenage pregnancy and AIDS", *CME*, 9 (1991), 1389-1394; Abdool Karim, S. S., Abdool Karim, Q., Preston-Whyte, E., & Sankar, N, "Reasons for lack of condom use among high school students", *South African Medical Journal*, 82 (1992), 107-110.

¹²⁵*Ibid.*

¹²⁶Katharine Wood & Rachel Jewkes, "Violence, rape and sexual coercion: Everyday love in a South African township", *Gender and Development*, 5 (1997), 41-46; Wood, K., Maforah, F., & Jewkes, R, "He forced me to love him: Putting violence on adolescent sexual health agendas", *Social Science and Medicine*, 47 (1998), 233-242.

differences into account. Variations in the social and cultural environments of young people make for heterogeneous behaviors and beliefs that are manifest both between populations, such as between developing and developed countries, and within populations, such as youth residing in our study area. If a key dimension of HIV-prevention programs involves peers working together to develop the confidence and solidarity to assert their rights to sexual health and non-violent relationships, there is a need to look further than the socially defined norms that often hinder the development of such confidence and solidarity.¹²⁷ In addition to considering the ways in which young people reproduce stereotypical norms and relationships, there is the need to investigate counter-stereotypical ways in which particular young people might already be developing strategies for resisting stereotypical gender norms, and for reshaping their sexual relationships in more health enhancing ways.¹²⁸ For this reason one key interest in the study's analysis was to examine ways in which these representations might be deconstructed and reconstructed in ways that promote safe sex behavior.

¹²⁷Catherine Campbell, Mzaidume, Y., & Williams, B, "Gender as an obstacle to condom use: HIV prevention amongst commercial sex workers in a mining community", *Agenda*, 39 (1998), 50-57.

¹²⁸Catherine Campbell, "The social identity of township youth: Social identity theory and gender (Part 2)", *South African Journal of Psychology*, 25 (1995), 160-167.

CHAPTER 3

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Ethical Concerns

Ethical concerns were raised concerning the unpredictable findings that could potentially arise from the study for instance, learning that a particular interviewee was being abused or bullied. It was agreed that the researchers had a paramount responsibility to safeguard the interests of the interviewees, and that it was imperative for them to maintain confidentiality throughout the research process and anonymity in the report writing.¹²⁹ The researchers used pseudonyms to protect the identity of individual participants, while simultaneously ensuring that their identities were not lost by referring to them as other girls, or another boy. There was a concern about the possibility of identifying and matching diary handwritings to the owners, and it was strongly recommended that all diaries be returned to the individual writers after transcription for them to do with as they deemed fit. However, in an instance in which the maintaining of confidentiality could pose potential harm to an interviewee (e.g. sexual abuse or domestic violence situation), it was deemed morally appropriate to renegotiate a course of action to alleviate their suffering (e.g. by reporting the matter to the relevant authorities). Fortunately, the researchers did not encounter such a situation in the course of the study.

¹²⁹ Pseudonyms have been used for all participants in the study and diary excerpts, in order to protect their identities. Any resemblance to the names of actual people is unintentional.

Limitations

Random sampling was used in the schools, communities and within Non-Governmental Organizations to select the sample. They were drawn from schools, health facilities, churches and NGO records. This type of selection of respondents was expected to, and did produce samples that were reasonably representative of Kenyan youth. The potential for misinterpretation or miscommunication during translation from Luo, Luhya, Kikuyu, and Swahili into English was very real in the actual transcripts. Although the researcher communicated effectively in Swahili with the interviewees, research assistants on the other hand, had trouble translating some questions and interpreting data for transcription. Considering the sample size, geographical distance (about a hundred miles apart) between the study sites, and the poor infrastructure, it was imperative that the researcher use young research assistants as translators, not only for practical reasons because they were quick on their feet, but also to capture the key objective of the research – representation of the youth voice.

Interviewing Youth

It is clear that the key elements of a particular context, the place and the people present, play a vital role in determining how young people identify themselves, and what they say about themselves and others. Research confirms the view that identities are multiple and fluid and are enacted differently in different contexts and with different people.¹³⁰ This has important implications for teachers, particularly life skills and HIV/AIDS educators, who need to reflect, and encourage their students to reflect, upon

¹³⁰Stuart Hall, "The Question of Cultural Identity" in S. Hall, D. Held and T. MacGrew, *Modernity and Its Futures* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992).

the ways in which they construct their identities and position themselves in relation to other students and teachers in class and in different contexts.

In this study, the researchers focus on how young people *present* themselves to the interviewers and the other interviewees. In analyzing the accounts of the interviewees, the researchers focus not just on what they say, but how they say it, including the emotions they express, and the kinds of relationships they forge with the interviewers and the other interviewees. For example, the researchers compare how boys and girls present themselves in interviews when articulating their views on girlfriends and sexuality. Below are several examples that illustrate the importance of examining the kinds of relations established between adult interviewers and young people, and how this affects the way they present themselves and what they say. When being interviewed alone by interviewers of the same gender, boys and girls tended to open up much more. In the same-gender interviews in Nakuru and Kisumu, girls were much more critical of boys, and vice versa. However, it was striking how positively the young people responded when friendly, non-judgmental adult interviewers of either sex addressed them as experts about themselves and their relations with others. One interviewee, for example, felt able to tell an adult woman observer/interviewer about being abused by his stepfather, something he had not been able to divulge to any other adult. During the Nakuru/Kisumu study, the interviewers observed that, the girls really had a lot of issues to raise and they said categorically that for the first time, they have had a chance to talk to people who were willing to listen to their concerns at that level. Young people spontaneously asked the interviewers questions about sex and sexuality, subjects that some said they could not talk about with their parents.

Among the questions asked and statements made by young people in Nakuru were the following:

How can I prevent AIDS?

I would like more information on organizations that deal with AIDS.

How many days will the menstrual period last and when will it come?

I need more information on sexuality.¹³¹

In rural Busia, there was evidence that young people presented themselves differently, and revealed different things about themselves, depending upon whether the interviewer was male or female, and Muslim or non-Muslim. This reflects the significance attached to gender and religion as aspects of their identities by young people living in a geographical region of mixed Muslim and non-Muslim residents. As one fifteen year-old schoolgirl described herself, "I am a disciplined girl and a practicing Muslim." Mohammed, a fifteen year-old boy, chose to reveal the existence of boy-girl friendships to a male Muslim interviewer while withholding the same information from a male non-Muslim interviewer. He revealed boy-girl friendships despite the fact that having girlfriends and boyfriends is considered morally wrong and is strictly prohibited among Muslim youth. To the non-Muslim interviewer, he appeared to replay the social script prescribed by the Islamic code of sexual conduct, denying that girls and boys ever have sexual relationships.¹³² In developing what appeared to be a relationship of trust with the Muslim interviewer, Mohammed also proclaimed his Islamic faith, adding that he was hardworking and happy to be male, "I like where God placed me," he said. To the non-Muslim interviewer, however, he presented himself as a secular boy who was a

¹³¹Interviewed by author, Oral Interview, Nakuru High School, Nakuru, Kenya, July 2006.

¹³²E. E McCoby, *The Two Sexes: Growing up Apart and Coming Together* (U.S.A., Belknap: Harvard University Press, 2000).

clever class prefect; religion or matters of God did not feature in this second construction of himself. This example clearly demonstrates the fluidity of gender identity within different social contexts and relationships.

Other young people in Busia also tended to open up more easily to interviewers of the same sex, as exemplified by fourteen year-old Dina, who was separately interviewed by male and female interviewers. Her relationship with the two interviewers was clearly different. The following excerpts show the various ways in which she positioned herself and responded to similar questions that were posed by the two interviewers:

Interview with the male research assistant:

- Interviewer: How many are you in your family?
 Dina: Five children, one girl, two parents.
 Interviewer: What do your family members do?
 Dina: Mother does hotel business in Busia. Father is a farmer in Bungoma.
 Interviewer: Are you popular?
 Dina: All girls are equally popular.
 Interviewer: If you were allowed to choose your sex today, which sex would you prefer and why?
 Dina: A girl... girls help mothers. Boys do not help.

Interview with the female research assistant:

- Interviewer: What do your family members do?
 Dina: My father's alone. He is a farmer. He grows fruits and tomatoes. Mother divorced a year ago. She is in Busia, working in a kiosk shop. She sends us money to buy clothes and shoes.
 Interviewer: Are you popular?
 Dina: I am popular. I have good behavior. I respect teachers and parents.
 Interviewer: If you were allowed to choose your sex today, which sex would you prefer and why?
 Dina: A girl; a girl is good. Girls are better than boys because they are clean. Boys are dirty.

Notably, neither of the two interviewers attempt to pursue issues that Dina raises or to engage with her in conversation. Despite this, however, she clearly offers the female interviewer greater scope for developing a conversational relationship. For example, when asked whether she is popular, she reflects upon herself with the female interviewer, and illustrates why she is popular. With the male interviewer, she simply makes a statement about girls in general and does not illustrate how she understands popularity. She provides much more detailed information about her family, including the fact of her parents' divorce, to the female interviewer.

Like Dina, in Busia, many of the young people in the study had strict religious backgrounds, for whom the mixing of boys and girls was discouraged on religious grounds. It may be that girls like Dina were particularly reluctant to open up to male interviewers because of their lack of interaction with males, especially when they were on their own. Significantly, Dina describes girls as clean and boys as dirty to the female and not the male interviewer. Perhaps she did not want to antagonize the male interviewer, whom she may have perceived as a grown up boy. Had the male interviewer been less detached and shown more interest in her, responding to topics she raised and asking her to elaborate upon them, she may have been more open with him. His detachment may have reinforced her view of him, because of his gender, as an outsider.

In the study, when the interviewers tried to establish a conversation and close rapport with their subjects, the sex of the interviewer (except in the strict Muslim communities) did not seem to influence how the young people responded. The researchers believe it is important that HIV/AIDS educators make sure that they develop similar kinds of relationships with both boys and girls for effective communication.

While being young person-centered in the approach, the researchers had to be careful about taking at face value what the interviewees say, and think more about the particular context of each interview and the kind of relationships the young interviewees were forging with the adult interviewers. In Busia, young people in their mid-to-late teens were asked if they had changed their perception and behavior as a result of AIDS education classes in school. All the boys and girls answered in the affirmative. The area of greatest change was in their sex lives, with most of them saying they were now being more careful and avoiding having sex altogether. Haji, a sixteen year-old eleventh grade boy, reported that because of AIDS education, the boys were no longer having sex with girls. He stated:

Now we are not going to do it because it destroys our bodies. Before the subject of AIDS education, boys used to have sex with girls. Now we are not going to do it.¹³³

This was actually contradictory, as most of his classmates had denied having any sexual relations whatsoever before sex education. So how had their behavior actually changed? Having been told by teachers of the horrors of AIDS and the dangers of sex, it seems hardly surprising that when they were asked by another adult if their behavior had changed in the light of this information, they invariably said, yes. This does not mean they were lying; rather they were relating to adults in ways that were expected of them. One of the researcher's recommendations is that teachers in general – and life skills and HIV/AIDS teachers in particular – should be trained to relate to young people in more democratic ways so that HIV/AIDS education is not experienced by young people as a form of moralizing.

¹³³Interviewed by author, Oral Interview, Esifugwe School, Busia, Kenya, May 2006.

Rather than attempting to create conditions of objectivity by minimizing the researchers' presence and influence as interviewers, researchers should recognize that they inevitably affect the behavior of the people they are researching. Indeed, the study would argue that researchers should be self-reflexive and examine how the people they are researching are positioning themselves in relation to them. This should provide researchers with powerful insights into their behavior and assumptions about gender and sexuality, as illustrated in the following account by one of the interviewers. Kevin, one of the research assistants, in his early twenties was in Nakuru, along with the rest of the research team, conducting observations at the Visions Nightclub and reported as follows:

The young men and the young females noticed that we (the interviewers) were new people in the club. In welcoming me, love was proposed. One man flashed 30,000 Kenya shillings at Ivy (an interviewer), saying that if she agreed to have sex with him he would give her all the money. He also asked to dance with her. The girlfriends of these men were not happy when they saw what was happening. They noticed that these young and beautiful female strangers (the interviewers) had grabbed the men's attention; they wanted to be friends with them. This was when we, (the young male interviewers) came to protect them. We (the male interviewers) were equally in danger because men and boys who patronized the nightclub wanted to fight us too. They thought we would grab their girlfriends. They also thought we had a lot of money, hence girls would flock to us. The door bouncers had to be sought in order to come and control the patrons, and they brought the situation under control. We (the male interviewers) who were proposed to by the girls were at a loss because we had no money to entice them. All we could do was dance with them, and since we had no money to buy them beers, the girls were not amused by this behavior.¹³⁴

The above passage provides a rich account of the ways in which heterosexual relations are negotiated between young men and women in night clubs, with males and females – including our interviewers – being constructed, respectively, as economic providers and recipients. This is an important theme that emerged in many of the

¹³⁴Participant observations by author, Visions Night Club, Nakuru, Kenya, June 2006.

interviews, and has important implications for HIV/AIDS education. The researchers see an example of the threat of violence arising from sexual jealousies, another prominent issue for the young people in the study, particularly for boys.

Construction of Identities

The examples mentioned earlier of how some of the young people in the study presented themselves to interviewers illustrate the importance of conceptualizing identity, not as an unalterable and unitary quality that people possess and describe when being interviewed, but as something that is *constructed* and *performed* in particular ways in specific contexts. The researchers examined how the young people in the study were performing and constructing themselves in relation to the ways in which they positioned themselves and interpreted the interviewers. Addressing identity in this way has important implications for research, such as, interviewers need to reflect upon their own identities and relations with the people they are studying. Throughout this study, the researchers investigated the ways that young people presented themselves in interviews, diaries and other contexts, paying particular attention to how the context influenced and affected what they said.

Most of the youth articulated masculine and feminine identities. Gender is addressed not as something that they possess, which shapes their thoughts and behavior in passive and preordained ways, but as something that they are constructing themselves with during the interviews. Subsequently, investigating the emotional investments that boys and girls make in their gender identities, as well as the ways that these identities are negotiated and contested becomes imperative.¹³⁵ In these communities, boys and girls

¹³⁵Wendy Hollway, *Subjectivity and Method in Psychology* (London: Sage, 1989).

are expected to perform different duties, are treated in different ways by their teachers and parents, and are often encouraged to stick with friends of their own sex. The researchers recognize that people are not free authors, simply inventing their gender and changing it at will, but rather, that they live in communities characterized by marked differences in expectations for girls and boys. The researchers looked at how boys and girls *construct* their identities within these social and cultural parameters. The study's approach was influenced by the discourse theory, which led the researcher to address what boys and girls said about themselves and others as constructions rather than descriptions of their identities.

The researchers asked the young people at all the sites if they would like to change sex for a day and what they imagine it would be like. The common revulsion expressed by both boys and girls when asked about this prospect suggests that many of the interviewees are strongly invested in constructing themselves in opposition to their views of the opposite sex. A Ministry of Education official seemed to share similar sentiments, saying the question about changing sex suggested an unnatural change. In group interviews with schoolboys in Nakuru and Busia, those boys who expressed a wish to become girls for a day were categorized as homosexual, an unacceptable characteristic in these communities. In Nakuru, homophobia seemed to play a significant part in the ways that boys tried to assert themselves as masculine by warding off possible accusations of femininity. Simply declaring an interest in becoming girls clearly posed an imagined threat to their male identities, implying just how fragile those identities were. Research in Britain and other western countries on boys and masculinity supports this imaginary threat, which points out how preoccupied boys are with distancing

themselves from girls and activities or characteristics that they define as feminine.¹³⁶

Adult men responded similarly at the Nairobi 2005 December workshop, ridiculing the question as one that was quite inappropriate for them as normal people who were satisfied with who we are. Some of them specified that only men with hormonal abnormalities could imagine being women. Following are some of the responses from the Nakuru youth when they were asked if they would like to change sex for a day:

Nakuru High School girls stated:

- Interviewer: You will be sad if you were a boy – why?
 Ciku: Yes, because I will be having attitudes of a boy when I am a girl.
 Interviewer: What are the attitudes of a boy?
 Ciku: Drinking beer.
 Njeri: Taking alcohol.
 Jane: Being attracted to simple things.

Nakuru High School Boys - when asked why they liked being boys:

- Wekesa: Girls respect you and I will inherit property from my father.
 Chege: Boys are brave and girls keep on laughing – I hate that.
 Gichinga: They are not easily raped.
 Kagai: They don't get pregnant.
 Mbui: They will be head of the house.
 Mukiri: Girls wash dirty things in the house.

Nakuru High School boys and girls stated:

- Atieno: Sometimes I'd like to be a boy. For example, if you want to go out with your friends, if you are a boy you just go. If you are a girl, you have to get permission first... of course, they are concerned about you... but at times you will just be wanting to go with your friends and just talk... sometimes you will just be wanting to visit your friend, a girlfriend . . .

¹³⁶Epstein D, "Boyz Own Stories: Masculinities and Sexualities in Schools" in C. Griffin and S. Lees (eds) special issue *Masculinities in Education, Gender and Education*, 9 (1997), 105-114; Nayak A, and Kehily M. "Playing it Straight: Masculinities, Homophobias and Schooling", *Journal of Gender Studies* 5(2): (1996), 211-230; Frosh et al. *Young Masculinities: Understanding Boys in Contemporary Society* (London: Palgrave 2002).

- sometimes it is boring, because if I was a boy I would just come back anytime!
- Interviewer: Boys, do you ever want to be a girl?
- Boys: Ah, no
- Owino: We only thought of it as kids when we were playing home . . . as kids . . . and were cooking. (Laughter from the group)
- Warui: It's unimaginable¹³⁷

While all the Busia and Nakuru boys and girls wanted to remain members of their own sex, it was significant that, Atieno, a girl expressed a desire to change her sex – in contrast to the other Kisumu boys, who laughed at the very suggestion. Clearly the boys and Atieno associate masculinity with certain privileges and freedoms.¹³⁸ Many of the girls in the study spoke about boys as being immature and troublesome, and, like the Busia and Nakuru girls, balked when asked to imagine what it would be like to change sex. Most of the girls were keen to present themselves as good by distinguishing themselves from other girls who are seen as behaving very much like boys by being too sexual, going out, drinking and attracting people of the opposite sex. This may explain why the Busia and Nakuru girls characterized boys in the way they did, distancing themselves as good girls from these popular characteristics of boys. The strong desire of most girls to remain girls, despite the attractions of being a male outlined by the boys and Atieno above, may stem from a sense that girls are more supportive of each other than boys and are able to develop closer relationships. Evidence of this came from the diaries that the research assistants asked boys and girls to keep during the study.

¹³⁷Interviewed by author, Oral Interviews, Nakuru High School, Nakuru, Kenya June 2006.

¹³⁸Commeyras and Montsi, "What If I Woke Up the Other Sex? Batswana Youth Perspectives" in *Gender and Education* (Vol. 12, Number 3, 2000), 327-346.

In Nakuru and Kisumu, there were significant differences in the ways in which boys and girls presented themselves in their diaries. The boys tended to write much less about their relationships with other boys than girls did with other girls; when they did, they usually wrote about them in cryptic and instrumental ways. Unlike the girls, who often referred to their friends by name, the boys' accounts were less personalized, mentioning other boys as people with whom they did things with such as play football or who caused them anxieties. For example

- Jimmie: Not joining my friends for soccer strained our relationship.
 Val: I was angered by a boy beating younger boys for no reason.
 Louis: I had a confrontation by some boy while I was with my girlfriend.
 Edward: My friend made a pass at my girl and I could not pretend to be happy.¹³⁹

While some boys indicated in their discussions that they were popular with other boys, none of them provided examples of how friendly they were with specific boys. Being popular was, rather, regarded as being superior to other boys, with football prowess being mentioned as an important criterion of popularity and masculinity.¹⁴⁰ The following excerpts from the interviews of some Nakuru and Kisumu boys show why they consider themselves to be popular:

- Ouma: Playing soccer for my team and scoring at matches.
 Gichinga: Being captain of my soccer team.
 Sunny: Because I was chosen to play middle field in our soccer team.¹⁴¹

¹³⁹Interviewed by author, Oral Interviews, Nakuru High School, Nakuru and St. Augustine High School, Kisumu, Kenya, May and June 2006.

¹⁴⁰Frosh et al. *Young Masculinities: Understanding Boys in Contemporary Society*, (London: Palgrave 2002).

¹⁴¹Interviewed by author, Oral Interviews, Nakuru High School, Nakuru and St. Augustine High School, Kisumu, Kenya, May and June 2006.

When boys did elaborate on their positive feelings for others, it was usually when they were talking about their girlfriends in a highly romanticized manner. By contrast, many of the girls talked about giving and receiving advice from other girls, and about the pleasure they derived from each other's company – laughing, singing, playing games – as well as joining clubs such as the Girl Guides. There was nothing about such subjects in any of the boys' discussions. The girls stated:

Jane: My friends all promised they will always be my friends...

Anne: We went into the toilet to see whether some clothing suited her and we stayed in the toilet sharing jokes.

Atieno: I made my friends beans and eggs when Mum was out.

Sophie: I was told by my friends I was beautiful with my tunic on and I was proud of myself.

Caro: We share the problem of boys proposing to us and advise each other that... what they need is sex, and will dump you after.¹⁴²

The ways the girls and boys presented themselves in relation to others in their discussions supports Carol Gilligan's claim that, once adolescence is reached, girls' style of identifying and behaving is relational and limited by the centrality of their relationships. Their morality becomes structured around an ethic of care. By contrast, separation and individuality are the predominant styles of adolescent boys. Unlike their female peers, boys are generally reported to be able to ignore the needs and desires of others and to make decisions independently – often dominating young women and those young men who struggle to manage such instrumental individuality.¹⁴³

¹⁴²Interviewed by author, Oral Interviews, St. Augustine High School, Kisumu, Kenya, June 2006.

¹⁴³Lyn Mike Brown and Carol Gilligan, *Meeting at the Crossroads: Women's Psychology and Girls' Development* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1992).

However, interviewers on girls' friendship groups in Britain have noted how small and insular these can be compared to boys' friendship groups.¹⁴⁴ Other girls are often seen as potential threats who may gossip and spread rumors, especially to do with their sexual feelings. Many girls in our study were very concerned about being identified as good by distancing themselves from girls who were perceived to be overly sexual. As can be seen in the following excerpts from the diary of Sophie, a teenager in Kisumu, this can generate conflict between girls and circumscribe their friendship groups:

May 26th - It was Friday afternoon, I met an unknown girl on the way, approaching me badly, saying that she heard that I am in love with one brother staying in Ahero. I questioned her whether she was just fishing for news or trying to get me.

May 30th - It was on Tuesday at school, there was a certain girl there, she looked at me, I don't know what I did bad to her . . . She is a gossip, she likes boys, she likes to be closer to boys, even though she insist herself to be around the boys.

June 7th - It was on Wednesday at school, there was a certain girl who likes gossiping about people after classes. One day she was explaining to my friend that, the way I look, I must be in love . . . I don't like to lie about somebody in front of me. If you want to take a walk with me, let's stop gossiping to one another please, because I am aware that you like to gossip, so please avoid to gossip because I see danger for you, please don't ever talk about me with your friend please.¹⁴⁵

Gossips were constructed not only as bad girls who might spread false rumors about one's relationships with boys, but were themselves blamed for being too close to boys.

¹⁴⁴ Angela McRobbie, "The Culture of Working Class Girls" in *Feminism and Youth Culture*, (London, McMillan, 1994); Valerie Hey, "The Company She Keeps" in *An Ethnography of Girls' Friendships* (Buckingham, UK: Open University Press, 1996).

¹⁴⁵ Diary excerpts, St. Augustine High School, Kisumu, Kenya, May and June 2006.

Boys were often described as strong, usually by boys, and indeed football was presented as something boys did because of the assumption that boys (in contrast to girls) were physically strong and active. Being good at football was an important criterion of male popularity – a marker of how masculine boys were. The researcher would argue that strength was taken to symbolize male superiority, and that, in describing themselves as strong, boys were not simply referring to attributes or characteristics they already possessed, but were constructing or making themselves superior to girls. It was particularly apparent, for example, when Cliff, a very thin boy from Kisumu suggested that mopping is a girl's job because they are too weak to lift up the tables, whereas boys are strong, and as he said this, he squeezed his fist and tried to show his biceps. Ironically, this boy looked much weaker than the girls who were being interviewed with him. Yet he was constructing or making himself stronger than the girls simply because he was a boy.

In some mixed gender interviews in which boys constructed themselves as stronger than girls, the girls resisted this. In one such mixed interview with older teenagers in Nakuru, a gender-polarized argument broke out on the question of whether women should be allowed to become auto mechanics. The volatile discussion generated strong emotions on either side – because the issue at stake was one of clarifying and asserting gender identities. Chima, a boy, claimed that being an auto mechanic and nursing babies were gendered opposites, stereotyping masculinity as strong and hard and femininity as soft and gentle:

Chima: Yeah . . . things like being a mechanic, fixing cars. You find most of the times just men fixing machines . . . women

- can't do it, and their job's like nursing a baby. Those jobs can't be done by a male. It's almost impossible.
- Interviewer: Almost impossible? Are you agreeing? (Murmurs of 'No' among the group) Yes – what do you say?
- Chima: On that thing of saying (clears throat) doing things equally, I think we should also consider . . . talking of a woman being a mechanic, we should consider things like the composition of muscles in a woman's body. (Laughter) It's not just a matter of talking. It's just that it is easy to say but it's hard to do. You know, look at the woman's composition of muscles in the body – they are less than a man's composition of muscles in the body. It's easy for a man to work with hammers, but give a hammer to a woman . . . you will see what's going to happen. So I think we should consider such things.
- Interviewer: Can we know what will happen? If you give them a hammer
- Chima: You give a woman a hammer, every two minutes she says "I am tired"¹⁴⁶

However, a girl, Nabii, was quick to challenge Chima's assertions, saying she could easily fit into the man's world, and do their jobs and quipped:

- Nabii: I mean, if a boy or a man can fix cars and do that kind of stuff, I mean work, what kind of a girl . . . what makes you think that she can't be a mechanic and fix cars? And if a girl can nurse a baby, what of a boy? 'Cos it's gender . . . all you animals are equal! (Everyone laughs) Me myself, I can do it It's easy.
- Interviewer: Is that what you think? Have you ever handled a spanner?
- Nabii: Yeah, I have done it before. I have done that before, because I even hammer nails onto chairs for sale at home . .

The boys were constructing themselves as physically stronger than the girls, arguing that girls were incapable of being auto mechanics. The important point here is why they were so keen to argue this. It seems that physical strength – which many boys in the other study sites also refer to when distinguishing themselves from girls – took on a symbolic character. It was taken to characterize boys and men, and to signify superiority

¹⁴⁶Interviewed by author, Oral Interviews, Nakuru High School, Nakuru, Kenya, July 2006.

over girls and women. Thus, in some boys' accounts, it came to stand for emotional and intellectual strength. The girls who argued that women were capable of being auto mechanics were resisting the ways that the boys were positioning girls and women as generally inferior. Following the challenge from the girls, some of the boys seemed to realize that they did not have any rational reason to support their hard stance with regard to being an auto mechanic as a man's domain. Nonetheless, they continued to assert themselves by appealing to some unwritten rules that they felt should govern gender relations, with men taking charge of what women should or should not do – in addition to insisting that women respect a man's word.¹⁴⁷ In the following excerpt, Kennedy stammers a little, perhaps because he is scraping the barrel for more reasons why girls should not be auto mechanics. However, his stammering may also reflect anxieties created by associating girls' fantasies about being auto mechanics with a desire to usurp male power as he states:

Kennedy: Now for the issue of saying that girls can fix cars... alright, it's totally al . . . al . . . alright, girls can fix cars, but the rule just says that girls shouldn't fix cars. Sometimes, like, girls might feel dizzy and it's just one way of showing respect for men. So that they can boast around, say . . . uuh, 'we work on cars'. Girls shouldn't fix cars and that kind of stuff.¹⁴⁸

In the group interviews in Kisumu, when girls were being constructed as being weaker than boys, the girls were sometimes seen as being in need of protection by their parents – or even by boys. As illustrated in the following excerpt, this can have the effect of restricting girls' movements and contributing to the view that girls are timid and tied,

¹⁴⁷M. Silberschmidt, "Disempowerment of Men in Rural and Urban East Africa: Implications for Male Identity and Sexual Behavior" *World Development*, Vol. 29, No. 4 (2002), 657-671.

¹⁴⁸Interviewed by author, Oral Interviews, Esifugwe School, Busia, Kenya, June 2006.

while boys are confident and free. Furthermore, when the girls resisted being positioned in this way, the boys tried to assert themselves by sexualizing girls, constructing them as objects of their free desires and as prone to pregnancy. In this interview, the boys attempt to justify why girls should be beaten or even starved for demanding equal rights. One boy, Henry, who tries to assert himself over his sister even identifies with his father's expectations that his meals should be ready when he arrives home, and that the females in the household should serve him. The discussion continues:

- Interviewer: OK . . . how do your parents treat boys and girls? Is it in any way different?
- Robbie: Girls are expected to be home by 7 pm; otherwise, they are chased away from home or beaten. Boys are left to do as they wish.
- Francis: Ah . . . that's not true!
- Makokha: It's true. Boys can even spend the night out and no one will ask, but girls will be told to go back where they spent the night.
- Robbie: It's true: girls are chased away from home but boys can come home anytime, even after 10pm. It's understood. But a girl has to explain where she was.
- Interviewer: What if she was with her friends?
- Cliff: What happens is, us guys don't get pregnant, so we have an advantage. Girls, however, can get pregnant and they bring their pregnancy home and then they get chased away.
- Interviewer: What if she doesn't get pregnant?
- Robbie: A girl can get beaten or they don't leave any food for her.
- Francis: Ah . . . you . . . you want to eat? Who do you think should prepare the food when you are not there?
- Robbie: Now if you say I should do everything for myself, I will end up going out with sugar daddies so that I come home after being bought some food.
- Interviewer: So you are saying parents treat boys and girls differently?
- Robbie: Yes, parents are easy on boys, but make life tough for girls.
- Interviewer: So who is at an advantage?
- Girls: (All together) Boys, boys, boys
- Interviewer: But don't you think, when parents say girls should be indoors by six, it's to protect girls?
- Jackie: Yes, but sometimes it's just too much.
- Interviewer: So boys don't matter?

- Fred: When a girl elopes for a boy, the boy can go and look for a job and he will fend for his new wife. But girls hang on around the home. Boys can do something for survival.
- Anne: Ah... even myself as a girl, I can do something
- Henry: Yes, of course, but the way you look for money, you don't do it properly, since you end up going to pubs to solicit for paid sex.
- Interviewer: So you boys are saying girls should be over-protected?
- Cliff: No, we are saying life will be tough for her since she is *just a girl*.
- Robbie: But we want equal rights, especially on treatment by our parents.
- Fred: This issue of equal rights, we don't want to hear about it.
- Jackie: (In a loud voice) Yes, we want equal rights!
- Henry: Would you want to work in the garden as I do?
- Anne: You guys . . . but you guys don't cook.
- Interviewer: You mean boys don't cook?
- Ouma: That's not true. Don't you see me cooking at home?
- Robbie: But there is no girl at your house. But this one (referring to her brother in the group), when he comes home late he actually demands for food to be served.
- Interviewer: OK . . . so this is your brother?
- Robbie: Yes.
- Interviewer: Good, so how does he treat you?
- Robbie: If its 6pm and I'm not yet at home, he shouts at me and at times almost beats me.
- Francis: If she is late, then we have to see to it that *we discipline her*. We want to see her at home before 6pm. She can't be anywhere else after 6pm unless she is at the market. If she is not found there too . . . ah . . . but I can get home, even at 10pm or even sleep out. My dad won't even ask for he thinks I am also *a father, a man, in the house too*. At times, I would have been looking for money just like he does. Anytime he comes home, no one asks about his whereabouts.¹⁴⁹

As this excerpt vividly illustrates, far from being protected from sexual exploitation, pregnancy and HIV/AIDS by the popular construction of boys and men as protectors of girls, girls become vulnerable precisely because boys and men position themselves as free, hedonistic males in relation to women – although not their sisters,

¹⁴⁹Interviewed by author, Oral Interviews, St. Augustine High School, Kisumu, Kenya, June 2006.

daughters or wives – as sex objects. Not only is their behavior controlled and regulated by their protectors; it also makes them sexually vulnerable. A major aim of HIV/AIDS and life skills education should be to encourage young people to become critical of, and much less invested in, sustaining and enacting these gender-polarized identities. This could involve promoting the possibilities, and natural benefits, of friendships with people of the opposite sex, mixing sexes on the football field, or encouraging boys to develop closer, more supportive relations with other boys.

While boys and girls are *active* in the process of differentiating themselves, they do so in particular social contexts and environments in which they are already categorized in different ways, for example, by being allocated different tasks and duties. The researcher wants to emphasize, however, that gender socialization is not a passive process, as is often portrayed, and that girls and boys automatically identify themselves with roles that are given and which they are expected to play. While many girls and boys may take these roles for granted, when asked to reflect upon them during the study, some girls became quite critical of how much domestic work, including service to others, they are expected to do.

In Busia, although the number of girls participating in the group interviews dropped due to a death in the family and one other fell sick, many others dropped out specifically because of the chores they had to do at home. In Nakuru, an urban area, the interviews showed that girls and boys were given more or less similar tasks by their parents – whereas, in rural areas, girls were generally given many more household duties than their brothers. The rural girls' diaries revealed that these duties were often exhausting, leaving them little time for other activities. Some girls as young as sixteen,

also played the role of head of households. These girls usually prepared the food, washed their siblings, cleaned the house, washed and ironed all the laundry. Indeed, one girl reported that these chores left her with no recreation time whatsoever, a fact confirmed by the daily schedule described in her diary. The interviewer was left wondering when she found time to study and do her homework.

Some girls expressed resentment of their household duties, saying it was unfair that only girls were expected to do them. Others, however, defined themselves by their duties, and were even proud of their domestic work. One recalled how “grandpa gave me twenty shillings (about twenty five US cents) and said to my mother he was proud of me and that I was such a hard working girl.” It was because the house was so clean when he arrived for a visit. Some of the boys, by contrast, mentioned that they felt angry when they were asked to do household chores.

In Busia, youth reported that their parents allocate duties according to traditional gender roles – with girls washing up, cooking the food, sweeping the house, doing the laundry, making the beds, and fetching water. Apparently, boys are never allocated any of this housework. When not in school, their duties comprise looking after cattle and assisting in construction work. In Kisumu, girls also did most of the domestic work in addition to going to the market to buy food, caring for younger siblings, and sometimes fetching water, particularly when boys were not around. The girls also said that they help their mothers in trade, for instance selling vegetables and other foodstuffs.

In predominantly Muslim Busia, the concept of free time did not appear to make much sense to young people, particularly to girls, who seemed to be occupied most of the time. As Mohammed, a fifteen year-old boy, asserted, girls are not allowed to be free.

Both boys and girls reported that they attended Madrassa (religious instruction) classes during their free time, and that boys played mainly football, during their free time. Boys also said they swam in the river, slept, visited friends and relatives, read, and played with their male friends. The boys perceived the roles allocated to girls as dirty, and more demeaning than those allocated to them. Khalid, a fourteen year old boy, said girls were responsible for washing dirty things in the house. Rather than sympathizing with the girls, the boys perceived their own roles as conferring a higher status upon them.

Many of the girls said their domestic duties limited the amount of time they could spend on their homework or study. In Zainab's words, "if your parents are good, they will let you do your homework, otherwise some parents say, '*sio mimi unasomea*' (you are not reading/studying for me)." The girls also said that, due to the work handed out by their parents in the mornings, they often arrived at school late – and were consequently reprimanded.

In urban Nakuru, many girls complained about what they saw as the unequal allocation of duties and tasks to boys and girls. Of the ten girls interviewed, all of them said boys did nothing at home, with one claiming they "just sit there and eat." They complained that fetching water, which was what boys were expected to do, was far less work than their share of the housework. However, the boys defended their privileged domestic position, with seven of the ten interviewed saying they disliked doing household chores because these were girls' jobs. The following comments from fourteen-year-old Kagai were typical of the way that most boys perceived their domestic roles:

Interviewer: What roles do boys do at home?

- Kagai: Fetch water, watch television . . .
- Interviewer: What else?
- Kagai: Visit friends . . . urr . . .
- Interviewer: How about girls – what roles do they perform at home?
- Kagai: Wash utensils and clothes, sweep the house, cook, and other duties in the house.
- Interviewer: How about you – what do you do in the home?
- Kagai: Watch television and fetch water.
- Interviewer: Any other?
- Kagai: No.
- Interviewer: How about household duties?
- Kagai: I do not like . . . urr . . . I do not like washing utensils.
- Interviewer: Why?
- Kagai: I feel it's a girl's job.¹⁵⁰

Kagai has clearly developed a dislike for work that he perceives to be feminizing. For him, the washing of utensils defines girlhood and is, therefore, a contradiction of his construction of boyhood. There were, however, a few boys who presented themselves as different, by stating that they *sometimes* contribute to domestic labor, although *mostly* when their sisters or mothers are not at home, or when they perceive particular jobs to be easy. Two boys stated:

I wash clothes and cook for myself when I am alone.
I like sweeping the house because it is easy.¹⁵¹

Interviews with schoolgirls in Nakuru revealed that, although a school duty roster was prepared allocating duties equally to boys and girls, the boys refused to wash the classrooms and instead negotiated with certain girls to swap duties – fetching water for them to wash the classrooms with. However, in any event, many of the boys dishonored these agreements. In response, the girls accused the teachers of ignoring the boys' exploitative behavior, leaving them to not only fetch the water, but also mop the floors.

¹⁵⁰Interviewed by author, Oral Interviews, Nakuru High School, Nakuru, Kenya, June 2006.

¹⁵¹Ibid.

The following is an account from Ciku, a fourteen year-old female class

prefect:

- Interviewer: Here in school, what duties are assigned to boys?
 Ciku: Sweep the class, fetch water . . . girls to mop the floor.
 Interviewer: Fetch water from where?
 Ciku: From the tap.
 Interviewer: For girls to mop the classrooms?
 Ciku: Yes.
 Interviewer: Why girls?
 Ciku: Boys don't like mopping the floor. They will leave the class like that and go to play.
 Interviewer: You are a prefect, what do you do about that?
 Ciku: Nothing.
 Interviewer: Why?
 Ciku: I can't punish them.
 Interviewer: Why not?
 Ciku: It's just like that. If I tell them to do something, they can beat me . . .
 Interviewer: Do you tell this to the teacher?
 (Silence)
 Interviewer: So you tell the girls to do it . . .
 Ciku: Yes.
 Interviewer: Does the teacher know?
 Ciku: Yes.
 Interviewer: And what do they do?
 Ciku: I . . . The teacher just leaves them outside, and the girls wash the classrooms¹⁵²

Allowing boys to get away without doing their share of school duties not only undermined Ciku's authority as a school prefect, but also belittled the other girls, associating them with certain domestic duties that their male counterparts did not want to do.

In rural Busia, schoolboys cleaned the classrooms while girls cleaned the school offices and the staff-room. The reason given by the boys and girls as well as the teachers for this division of responsibilities was that there were relatively few girls – and they

¹⁵²Interviewed by author, Oral Interviews, Nakuru High School, Nakuru, Kenya, July 2006.

cleaned the offices better than the boys. One of the boys, fifteen year-old Omari, also stressed the importance of adhering to religious requirements when allocating school duties, pointing out that "it is not Islamic for boys and girls to work together". In Kisumu, female students regularly complained that boys were given preferential treatment when it came to allocating school duties. As Sophie, said, " Boys are not allocated duties like polishing, sweeping and other chores that are disliked by all students. They are given duties in the dining hall and picking up litter."¹⁵³

In all the study sites we visited, boys and girls were allocated different duties at home and at school, with the differences being most marked in rural areas. Being assigned different duties was a key way of marking and constructing gender differences and, as we have seen in the previous interview excerpts, reinforcing gender power relations. Rather than assuming that girls and boys passively and automatically assume different identities because of the different duties allocated to them, our interviewers encouraged young people to talk about whether they liked or did not like doing their duties and what they thought of this division of labor. Most girls spoke about how much harder and more time consuming girls' work was compared to boys' work. Although some girls took pride in their duties, most girls complained about how unfree they made them compared to boys. It is, of course, likely that they were able to complain like this precisely because of the kind of questions they were being asked, and their perception of the interviewers as being sympathetic to their predicament. Indeed, several of the interviewers commented in their notes about how shocked they were at the quantity of domestic work that the girls were expected to do.

¹⁵³Interviewed by author, Oral Interviews, St. Augustine High School, Kisumu, Kenya, June 2006.

cleaned the offices better than the boys. One of the boys, fifteen year-old Omari, also stressed the importance of adhering to religious requirements when allocating school duties, pointing out that "it is not Islamic for boys and girls to work together". In Kisumu, female students regularly complained that boys were given preferential treatment when it came to allocating school duties. As Sophie, said, "Boys are not allocated duties like polishing, sweeping and other chores that are disliked by all students. They are given duties in the dining hall and picking up litter."¹⁵³

In all the study sites we visited, boys and girls were allocated different duties at home and at school, with the differences being most marked in rural areas. Being assigned different duties was a key way of marking and constructing gender differences and, as we have seen in the previous interview excerpts, reinforcing gender power relations. Rather than assuming that girls and boys passively and automatically assume different identities because of the different duties allocated to them, our interviewers encouraged young people to talk about whether they liked or did not like doing their duties and what they thought of this division of labor. Most girls spoke about how much harder and more time consuming girls' work was compared to boys' work. Although some girls took pride in their duties, most girls complained about how unfree they made them compared to boys. It is, of course, likely that they were able to complain like this precisely because of the kind of questions they were being asked, and their perception of the interviewers as being sympathetic to their predicament. Indeed, several of the interviewers commented in their notes about how shocked they were at the quantity of domestic work that the girls were expected to do.

¹⁵³Interviewed by author, Oral Interviews, St. Augustine High School, Kisumu, Kenya, June 2006.

It was also observed that in identifying as powerful figures, which many of the boys did, they were, like the girls, actively constructing rather than passively learning their identities. For example, the researcher saw how some boys constructed themselves as superior to girls by demeaning the latter because of their involvement in domestic work, and by feminizing domestic work and complaining if they were given domestic jobs to do. The researcher found that boys and girls were positioned in different ways in their communities – by being allocated different duties – they tended to make similar stereotypical generalizations about masculinity and femininity, constructing them as opposites and playing them off in relation to each other. In Table 2 below, we see how each of these pairs of characteristics is a binary opposite, one begets the other.

Table 2. Binary Opposite Characteristics

Girls	Boys
Passive	Active
Quiet	Loud
Good	Naughty
Not Sexual	Sexual
Objects of boys' sex drives	Have powerful sex drives
Tied to the home	Free to go out as they please
Not sporty	Sporty
Weak	Strong

For example, by constructing boys as strong, the young people are implicitly or explicitly constructing girls as weak. Stereotypical constructions of gender like these emphasize gender differences. Despite this, however, many girls clearly want to be free to do the same things as boys.

As was mentioned in the example of the weak-looking boy who said mopping up was a girl's job, such gender stereotypes gloss over differences between boys and differences between girls. They are not simply descriptions of what boys and girls are really like, but rather tell boys and girls what they *ought* to be like and how they *should* behave. By describing girls as weak and unfree, for example, boys are telling them that they *should* stay at home and cook for the men.

The study suggests that many boys enjoy privileges that are denied to girls, and identify as powerful by constructing themselves and girls in these stereotypical ways. However, while our young interviewees were constantly alluding to, reacting to and dealing with stereotypical constructions of masculinity and femininity, they orientated themselves in particular and different ways in relation to these stereotypes. Some embodied them more than others, and some – notably girls – resisted or re-evaluated them. As well as contesting stereotypes of girls as weak and boys as strong, some girls also focused on positive versions of femininity – such as being good in contrast to naughty and immature boys. Stereotyping males and females in such ways can encourage unequal and exploitative gender relations. Such relations can, the researcher argues, heighten the risk of contracting HIV/AIDS.

Family, School, Gender and Sexuality

The researcher examined these young people's relations with their teachers and parents, particularly how possible it was for them to talk to these adults about themselves and issues of gender and sexuality. The researcher focused on sexuality education in school and on sexuality education at home; HIV/AIDS and life skills lessons in school and examined the kinds of messages that boys and girls received, the sorts of relations they established with their teachers and classmates, and how they performed or acted in class. The researcher compared the ways that boys and girls interacted in the interviews with how they interacted in the classes that were observed.

The researcher examined boys' and girls' relations with their mothers and fathers, the forms of communication that commonly existed between them, and other forms that could be adopted and encouraged. The researcher addressed the sensitive issue of the sexualization of girls at home and tried to address teachers' and parents' concerns about education on matters of sex and HIV/AIDS, making suggestions for good pedagogic practices in life skills education. The researcher saw the school and the home as vital arenas in which boys and girls learn about gender and sexuality, irrespective of whether their parents and teachers discuss such issues with them. As is argued, young people are not innocent but are sexual beings, and they receive powerful messages about sexuality from adults *not* talking to them about these issues.

In the study, the researcher was interested not only in young people's views about or experiences of sex, but also, more generally, in how they saw and defined themselves as particular boys and girls with certain interests, desires and relationships with others. Sexuality, however, emerged as an important theme in many of the interviews – whether

the subjects claimed to be engaging in sex or not, or were pro- or anti-boyfriends and girlfriends. The focal point of HIV/AIDS education, taught within a learner centered framework, should not be HIV/AIDS itself, but rather the lives, identities and relationships (sexual *and* non-sexual) of young people.

Findings from the study indicate that HIV/AIDS and sexuality education in Kenyan schools, families and communities focuses specifically on sex. This is not because the learners themselves introduce sex as a topic of conversation in class, rather, the teachers decide to focus on sex – presenting it in an authoritarian way as something which is bad for young people and which they should avoid. However, concentrating exclusively upon sex is embarrassing for many teachers and it may be partly because of this that, when they do so, they present sex as bad. This is illustrated in the following excerpts of what some schoolboys and girls in Nakuru said they learned as part of HIV/AIDS education. They stated:

Warui:	Girls can bring diseases to us.
Njeri:	Don't have sex because of HIV/AIDS.
Owino:	Boys start looking for women and can be infected.

Lessons that Boys Learned from Parents and Grandparents:

Mukiri:	Avoid sex with girls, which are a shame and can bring diseases.
Kagai:	Sex is bad manners or habits – you should not have a girlfriend.
Chege:	Do not choose girls who are sexy because they may have diseases.

Messages that Girls said they Received in School and at Home:

Atieno:	Don't walk with the boys.
Ciku:	Don't have sex because I may end up pregnant.
Jane:	Behave well and avoid evil things. ¹⁵⁴

¹⁵⁴Interviewed by author, Oral Interviews, Nakuru High School, Nakuru, Kenya, June and July 2006.

From these statements, it appears that most of the sex education these young people are receiving takes the form of warnings about the negative consequences of relationships – disease, pregnancy, evil things – without a hint that anything good may come of them. According to the students' testimonies, HIV/AIDS education does not address their sexual desires, feelings, fears, anxieties, or any other emotional and psychological aspects of human life.¹⁵⁵ The researcher would suggest that this is problematic for a number of reasons. Firstly, with its emphasis on avoiding sex, HIV/AIDS education is not aimed at the many young people in the study who claimed they were already sexually active. Secondly, whether or not learners were engaging in sexual relations, sexuality was highly significant in their lives – as was apparent in the emotionally engaged ways that they spoke about relationships and feelings. Failing to respond to young people's sexual desires, pleasures and anxieties, but instead representing them in a negative light, HIV/AIDS education not only contributes to young people's worries about sex, but helps to confirm the view that sexual desires and concerns are not topics that should be discussed with adults. Yet, paradoxically, many young people expressed the wish to do precisely that.

Of particular concern, are the effects of this kind of HIV/AIDS education on boys' and girls' perceptions of each other. Not only does such education encourage boys to stereotype and stigmatize girls as potential disease carriers and girls to see boys as dangerous sexual predators, it also presents relations between boys and girls as generally

¹⁵⁵Kasente, D., Sekammatte-Sebuliba, J. and Ekirikubinza, L., "African Cross-National Development of Appropriate Methodologies for Research into the Nature and Practice of Sexual Harassment in Educational Institutions" (*Report of Focus Group Discussions in Secondary Schools in Uganda*, Entebbe: November, 1998).

bad – thus prohibiting the possibilities of boys and girls developing even non-sexual friendships. It is small wonder that young people keep secret (from adults) their close relations with people of the opposite sex, or their fantasies about them.

In Kisumu, there was evidence that HIV/AIDS education was not being taught in a learner centered way, or within a life skills framework. The inherent problems with this clearly emerge in the following interview with a fourteen year old girl and two boys, aged eighteen and sixteen:

- Interviewer: What was the atmosphere like during those lessons?
 Edward: The teacher would ask questions and we would answer.
 Interviewer: Did you mention names of sexual organs?
 Edward: We would mention their names in Luo.
 Interviewer: Did you not answer in English?
 Cliff: Not at all.
 Interviewer: Why were you not answering in English?
 Anne: We answered in Luo only.
 Interviewer: How sure were you that the names of those parts were correctly translated into English?
 Anne: In our class, there were repeaters who used to tell us the correct answers.
 Interviewer: Why then did you deliberately avoid using English while talking about sexual organs?
 All: We don't know.¹⁵⁶

Interestingly, some teachers claimed that sexuality was taught in Luo in sixth grade classes – a way of avoiding the embarrassment that would ensue from discussing sex and sexual organs in English. It would seem, from the above, that HIV/AIDS lessons were taught in a rather didactic way: “the teacher would ask questions and we would answer.” There was no indication here of students setting the agenda or being encouraged to reflect upon and discuss issues pertaining to sexuality that interested or concerned them. Responding to the last question, all the respondents were shy – but

¹⁵⁶Interviewed by author, Oral Interviews, St. Augustine High School, Kisumu, Kenya, June 2006.

Anne was more shy, reluctant to answer, looking down to hide her face. Some of the teachers interviewed indicated that they found it difficult to speak about sexuality, especially in mixed-sex classes, and confirmed that, when such issues were raised, children – especially girls – became timid in class. Some teachers said that, as boys discover girls' secrets (relating to female sexuality), they become more active and curious, asking questions with less embarrassment. It seems that the teachers themselves were responsible for constructing boys as active agents in sex education – and girls as its objects. In general, boys participated more actively than girls, possibly because girls had to be careful not to show knowledge and interest in this subject for fear of being seen as bad. Many teachers interviewed felt embarrassed and vulnerable in HIV/AIDS lessons, and may have adopted a moralistic and didactic approach to assert their authority and protect themselves. Teachers in Busia, for example, spoke about the discomfort they felt, as adults, being addressed as sexual beings by children in HIV/AIDS lessons stating:

Mr. Afande: They can ask whether we (teachers) have been tested. They feel teachers are always talking about these things, while even they could be infected.

Ms. Seda: I remember one student wanted to know if I have ever used a female condom, and how it feels. I told them that I have never used it and that they should not become personal when we talk about these things.

Mr. Madimwa: I remember there was a child at one point when we were discussing abstinence and withdrawal. The student was saying from experience he knows that withdrawal is impossible. And I was supposed to make a comment on that.¹⁵⁷

The very fact that these youth felt able to pose these questions suggests that perhaps these teachers were not being too didactic and authoritarian. Yet, if teachers show that *they* are embarrassed by explicit talk about condoms, menstruation and

¹⁵⁷Interviewed by author, Oral Interviews, Esifugwe School, Busia, Kenya, May 2006.

sexuality, this suggests to students that such talk is embarrassing and may inhibit some students from speaking (as well as possibly encouraging others to disrupt lessons by deliberately talking in ways that they know will embarrass the teacher).

According to some of the girls interviewed, girls were much quieter in class than boys because they feared being ridiculed by boys, as noted in the following excerpt from a mixed sex interview in Nakuru:

- Wekesa: Girls – you don't have self-confidence, so you think you are treated differently.
- Interviewer: Do you girls agree? Do you not have self-confidence?
- Njeri: Yes, it is true. Sometimes when a girl knows the answer she does not raise her hand, so the teacher thinks she does not know.
- Atieno: Yes, it is because the boys laugh at us if we get the answer wrong.
- Sunny: Of course, if the answer is way out, we laugh . . .
- Florence: But that will be the answer I think is right.
- Wekesa: As I said . . . you don't have self-confidence. You come to school to learn, so why should you worry if a boy laughs at you. You should not bother because you are there to learn.
- Interviewer: But do you boys laugh when other boys get the answers wrong?
(Inaudible murmur from the boys)
- Nancy: They only laugh at girls.
- Sunny: That's not true . . .
(More murmurs from the boys)
- Nancy: All the boys laugh when we get the answer wrong, even those who don't know the answer also laugh.
- Florence: Girls should just ignore the boys and get on with their work.¹⁵⁸

Quietness and loudness are not natural female or male characteristics, according to these girls, but are constructed as if they are through the interaction of boys and girls in class. The boys attribute the girls' quietness to what they assume is a general and natural feminine failing – lack of self-confidence. This allows Wekesa to accept that girls may

¹⁵⁸Interviewed by author, Oral Interviews, Nakuru High School, Nakuru, Kenya, July 2006.

be quiet because they are laughed at by boys, while still blaming girls for their lack of confidence and their inability to withstand this. Of course, these girls showed confidence in challenging the boys in this interview.

In other interviews, it emerged that girls are sometimes insulted sexually for getting answers wrong in class. In Kisumu, teenaged girls reported boys making dirty jokes when this happened. The girls found this particularly abusive and threatening, and, therefore, an effective way of silencing them and putting them, (girls) in their place. It was particularly problematic for girls to speak about sexuality – and therefore to be active contributors in HIV/AIDS classes.

One of the key findings in the study concerned the application of sexual double standards towards girls and boys. In each site, a distinction was drawn (by both boys and girls) between good and bad girls, which centered on sexuality. Bad girls were described as wearing miniskirts (and, because of this, inviting rape), being too modern, drinking, staying out late, and having boyfriends. Girls could be insulted for appearing to transgress perceived traditional models of femininity, being too knowledgeable, or even speaking too openly or confidently in mixed gender interviews – as in class. Interviewers reported that boys tended to participate much more in school, to be much louder – and more likely to assume positions of responsibility in HIV/AIDS and life skills classes.

During an AIDS Awareness lesson in Kisumu, the following transpires:

There was a lot of whispering among the learners during the lesson. Girls sat separately from the boys. Boys participated more than the girls and when asked to answer a question the girls answered in very low tones, and when asked to repeat their responses, they kept quiet most of the time. Girls were quiet and shy, reserved, looked down when certain words were being mentioned, i.e. “sex”, “sexually active”, “sexual intercourse”. Boys got most of the attention from the teachers throughout the lesson. No

attempt was made to engage girls in discussion; they were often forgotten. One girl was active but not noticed by the teacher. The girls looked down when asked to answer a question and there were incidences of laughter, especially when a boy mentioned the use of condoms and when another boy narrated the day his father called for a family meeting to discuss HIV/AIDS.¹⁵⁹

In a moral education lesson in Busia, the following is observed:

Girls occupied most of the front seats while boys sat at the back. Some of the girls did not appear eager to contribute and the teacher made no effort to invite them into the discussion. They passively stared at learners on the other side of the class, who were contributing. During a discussion on whether women could be leaders, a girl asserted that men were created to be leaders, although they are to lead with women's assistance. The teacher commented that, in Luhyia culture, "men are the heads of the family and everywhere" – to which a boy at the back shouted, "Yes, it is true." The teacher gave an example of Muslims, where women having their monthly periods are not allowed to go to the Mosque, and posed the question: "What if the woman was the leader of the Mosque? The boys burst into laughter and some commented that there would be no prayers."¹⁶⁰

In a life skills lesson in Nakuru, the researcher observed:

For group work, there were single-sex groups and mixed-sex groups. In the mixed-sex groups, girls were seen doing mostly secretarial work while boys chaired the group discussions. The boys would discuss among themselves and then tell the girls what they were discussing. The girls just sat there and waited for the boys to tell them what to write. In the single-sex groups, there seemed to be equal participation.¹⁶¹

It is important that teachers – particularly those teaching HIV/AIDS and life skills – are taught to reflect upon the gender dynamics in class, and to think of ways of challenging rather than reinforcing popular views of girls as quiet, shy and subordinate and boys as active, funny, loud and dominant. Not only do teachers have an obligation to encourage the participation of *all* learners, but, by focusing on boys rather than girls, they

¹⁵⁹ Author observation, non participatory observation, St. Augustine High School, Kisumu, Kenya, June, 2006.

¹⁶⁰ Author observation, non participatory observation, Esifugwe School, Busia, Kenya, May 2006.

¹⁶¹ Author observation, non participatory observation, Nakuru High School, Nakuru, Kenya, July 2006.

are contributing to a culture in which boys are expected to take the initiative and to subordinate girls (sexually as well as in other ways) – resulting in girls having difficulties negotiating relationships with boys. This increases the chance of boys and girls engaging in relationships with little communication and perhaps little respect and empathy for each other, which may lead to a greater risk of unprotected sex and HIV/AIDS infection. The researcher suggests that the teachers here were consciously intending to promote such gender stereotypes – rather than that they were taking it for granted that boys are naturally more demonstrative and girls naturally more shy, and were responding accordingly. One of the key lessons that emerged from the interaction between boys, girls and teachers was precisely that girls were quiet, passive and shy (even those who tried to contribute) and boys active and loud, and that boys were sexual beings and girls the objects of their desires. Teacher training in life skills and HIV/AIDS education must involve sensitizing them to aspects of this hidden curriculum, and the sorts of messages about gender identities and relations that are commonly communicated through it.¹⁶² It should also encourage teachers to think creatively of ways of changing their practices so as not to unintentionally reinforce the sorts of stereotypical gendered positions that the boys and girls were taking up in the classroom observations noted. This could, involve experimenting with single-sex group work as a way of encouraging girls to develop stronger voices in mixed-sex discussions about gender and sexuality. However, it is also important that this methodology is not used alone, but in conjunction with mixed group teaching.

¹⁶²Spender, D. *Invisible Women* (London: Writers and Readers, 1982).

One important finding in Kisumu and Nakuru concerned the male domination of anti-AIDS groups and drama groups in schools. The interviewers found that many more boys than girls were members of these groups, and they also occupied nearly all the important leadership positions. In all sites, it was reported that girls who joined their schools' anti-AIDS clubs were viewed as bad by other students – and even by teachers – because it was assumed that they were joining them in order to establish sexual relations with boys. In Kisumu, girl members of the anti-AIDS club were reportedly denied funding to organize meetings with young people in other co-educational schools because it was assumed that they just wanted to meet boys. This reflects the prevalence of sexual double standards, through which girls speaking openly about sex in the presence of boys are regarded as overly sexual and bad. The relative absence and invisibility of girls in anti-AIDS clubs is very problematic and has important implications for the kinds of materials and messages that such groups produce. It is vital that boys and girls work together to develop the kinds of relations and social skills that will help to protect them from HIV/AIDS.

Many interviewers in western countries have observed how boys try to assert themselves in relation to girls in the classroom by performing their identities in certain ways – for example, by monopolizing group discussions, being loud or funny, or being naughty and making various types of threats to girls.¹⁶³ Some of the mixed group interviews conducted were characterized by such performances by certain boys as re-captured below.

¹⁶³Francis, B, "Oppositional Positions: Children's Construction of Gender in Talk and Role Plays Based on Adult Occupation", *Educational Research*, 40 (1998), 31-43; Paul Connolly. *Early Years Anti-Sectarian Television*. Centre for the Study of Conflict, University of Ulster (1999), 109.

The first was an interview with two girls and two boys (all in their mid to late teens) at a group session in Nakuru, in which the researcher was disseminating the findings of the study to interviewees, and teachers. Interviews were conducted with the participants around particular themes emerging from the research – in this case the theme of modern and traditional practices, and whether the latter infringed upon or protected the rights of girls. What was striking about the responses of the young people was how loud and assertive the boys were, and how quiet and disinterested the girls became. Though the facilitator, a young female in her twenties, tried to draw the girls in by asking them specific questions, the conversation was mainly between her and the boys. Rather than communicating their lack of interest by becoming disruptive or talking to each other, the girls merely sat quietly, sometimes with glazed expressions, occasionally smiling slightly when they perceived one of the boys to be saying something outrageous. The conversation involved the facilitator asking provocative questions and the boys supporting each other and asserting what they saw as their traditional right to lead and subordinate girls and women.

Like many of the boys in our study, these boys blamed girls for being too modern and wearing miniskirts and tight trousers that invited rape – rather than boys and men for carrying out such rapes. When asked by the facilitator how they would feel if their sisters were raped, the boys constructed themselves as protectors and derived from this a sense of their superiority as males. Throughout the discussion, they identified boys and men as alternating between two powerful positions: one as subjects of an insatiable heterosexual drive, the other as protectors of girls (from boys and men with such drives). They constructed themselves not only as protectors of girls from boys and men – but also from

the girls' own tendency to forget tradition and culture and become too assertive and sexually active. In doing so, they were identifying themselves as the upholders of tradition.

As in the mixed group discussion in Kisumu, when the boys were so keen to assert how physically incapable girls were of becoming auto mechanics, the boys here focused on grave digging as an activity that was completely incompatible with frail feminine physiques. This was one of the few occasions when one of the girls challenged the boys – asserting that she could dig a grave if she wanted to. The boys tried to maintain their superiority by retorting loudly and quickly that females would not do such a thing voluntarily, unlike males who were naturally stronger and for whom such work was presumably vocational. Physical strength, as in the Nakuru interview, was treated as a symbol of male superiority, as well as emotional, moral and intellectual strength – the latter manifested in the boys monopolizing the discussion and putting down any challenges from the girls. Not only were these boys assuming powerful masculine identities; they were also performing them in relation to the girls.

In a mixed group interview with a teenagers in Busia, the boys not only asserted themselves in relation to girls by dominating the conversation, but also by speaking about them in contemptuous and provocative ways. Whether they actually engaged in the sort of behavior they were describing or not, they elicited a great deal of laughter from the other boys by talking in self-consciously outrageous ways about girls as sex objects, as things to be opened and then thrown away. They said:

Cadi: These days, kids have big bodies. By the time she gets to Form 1, she will be having affairs.

Interviewer: Even those in Grades four and five (aged ten to eleven years)?

- Konje: Er, yes . . . those in Grade four, yes. Those are the ones we are jumping for these days. (Laughter)
- Interviewer: Why do you go for such young girls?
- Konje: You know what, yes, us boys have an oppressive nature. Once I sleep with a girl I lose interest in her, so usually I want to go for those who still have 'intact closed presents'. (Laughter and grumbles)
- Interviewer: What presents?
- Konje: Official opening – when you sleep with a virgin!
- Interviewer: So how do you feel about it?
- Konje: I feel good – it's nice. After the official opening, you can just ditch her . . .
- Interviewer: So if a boy dumps you, what do you do?
- Dina: It depends on how much you loved him. If you really loved him, you will be pained.
- Tukio: I . . . I won't feel that way. I will actually look around for a replacement boyfriend, and I will show off to the boy who dumped me.
- Jomo: That's when I will beat you.
- Chichi: Why should you beat me? Isn't it you would have dumped me?
- Cadi: Yes, I will beat her because what she will be doing to me is painful, showing off to me . . .
- Chichi: But it is you who would have ditched me.¹⁶⁴

Group dynamics such as those demonstrated in the excerpts above pose serious ethical dilemmas for teachers who are committed to a learner-centered approach. If teachers are to encourage young people to speak openly about sex and sexuality in class, they must work hard – like our interviewers – to develop friendly, non-judgmental relations with their students. Nevertheless, as we have seen in these excerpts, this approach can also lead to boys dominating discussions at the expense of girls, as well as abusing them. In the excerpt above, the Busia boys were forging a common identity as powerful, funny, hedonistic males by talking outrageously about girls. The presence of girls in the interview only served to make them appear, in each other's eyes, even more outrageous and funny. It may be that the girls were silent because they were so

¹⁶⁴Interviewed by author, Oral Interviews, Busia social hall, Busia, Kenya, May and June 2006.

uncomfortable and did not want to be humiliated and abused further. However, the interviewer was concerned to give them the opportunity to respond to the boys. Significantly, he had to put questions specifically to the girls to draw them into the conversation – leading to a heated and gender-polarized exchange in which the girls resisted the boys' constructions of them as used goods while the boys tried to reassert themselves. What was apparent in this exchange was how quickly the boys' tone changed from humor to hostility when the girls started challenging them. This and the initial reluctance of the girls to challenge the boys no doubt reflected, in part, the ubiquity of sexual double standards – through which boys derive status while girls are condemned for speaking explicitly about their heterosexual needs and desires.

It may be useful to establish some ground rules for HIV/AIDS and life skills education, whereby the group agrees to certain rules of behavior, such as not speaking in abusive ways about others, not interrupting others while they are speaking, not laughing at others. This may encourage boys and girls to relate to each other in new ways, and to see life more from the point of view of the other. However, the researcher would argue that teachers of HIV/AIDS and life skills education should avoid being seen as censors, and that young people should be able to talk about how they see themselves and the opposite sex during lessons – even in ways similar to those illustrated in the excerpts above. What is essential, is that more opportunities are created for girls to talk and to assert themselves.

One of the main aims of HIV/AIDS and life skills education must be to encourage boys and girls not to see and define themselves in opposition to each other. This means encouraging them to challenge popular stereotypes of boys as loud, assertive, funny and

highly sexual, and girls as quiet, unassertive and non-sexual (or as sexual objects for boys and men). The researcher contends that such gender performances do not reveal characteristics that boys and girls are born with, or that they naturally exhibit. Indeed, boys and girls (as well as men and women) can and do change – both their behavior and their perceptions of themselves – when talking about their pleasures and anxieties with people of the same or the opposite sex. Indeed, after some of the group interviews, several interviewees reported thinking about themselves differently and seeing people of the opposite sex as less opposite.

The study, in particular the experience of interviewing young people in single-sex and mixed groups – suggests that single-sex group work should form an integral part of all life skills and HIV/AIDS education. In such groups, girls in particular feel more able to participate with confidence and to express their desires and concerns without being labeled in derogatory ways. Life skills and HIV/AIDS education needs to encourage girls to talk about sexuality, not merely in a negative way but about their own positive feelings and desires. It needs to address the question: how can girls assert themselves without being constructed as bad or overly modern? The research suggests that this is often more possible in single-sex classes. However, such classes also tend to reinforce assumptions that boys and girls are essentially different and in opposition to each other. In the mixed group discussions, boys and girls are in a better position to learn from each other about their problems, concerns and views. For this reason, the researcher advocates a carefully

weighted combination of single-sex and mixed group discussions as part of a comprehensive strategy for HIV/AIDS and life skills education.¹⁶⁵

As the following comments from teachers in Nakuru suggest, both boys and girls can be inhibited by the presence of members of the opposite sex – particularly when teaching about male and female condoms, menstruation and teenage pregnancy:

Ms. Tindi, Moral Education teacher stated:

Girls are not comfortable when they are taught about teenage pregnancy in the presence of boys.

Ms. Kirui, Social Studies teacher stated:

When teaching them about using condoms, the boys feel offended, and when teaching about female condoms, I as a teacher and girls feel uncomfortable. Talking about menstruation, for instance, is like talking about oneself.

Ms. Ngesa, Guidance & Counseling teacher stated:

We were discussing factors of hormonal imbalance, whereby during their menstruation periods, females may be moody. The boys then became embarrassed in a way. I think it is a problem of culture, whereby we cannot discuss female issues in the presence of males.¹⁶⁶

While young people and their teachers may find it easier to talk about such issues in single-sex groups, it is vital that such topics do not become characterized as exclusively male or female. Condom use (whether male or female) and pregnancy affect both sexes, and one of the aims of HIV/AIDS education must be to encourage boys and girls to talk about these issues in the presence of each other. While single-sex groups could be used initially to address issues that boys and girls may consider too embarrassing in mixed company, it is important that this does not become an end in itself.

One study practice adopted by the Busia interviews that generated a great deal of critical reflection among young people was to organize group work in two stages. First,

¹⁶⁵Robert Pattman, "Men Make Difference: The Construction of Gendered Student Identities at the University of Botswana" *Agenda No. 53, Special Issue on Education, Youth and HIV/AIDS* (2002), 33-42.

¹⁶⁶Interviewed by author, Oral Interviews, Nakuru High School, Nakuru, Kenya, June and July 2006.

same-sex groups were asked to identify the sorts of gender-related problems they thought they and people of the opposite sex experienced, together with the causes of and possible solutions to these problems. Then the boys and girls came together to present and discuss their findings. The researcher suggests that this could very effectively be incorporated as a learner centered and gender sensitive pedagogy into broader HIV/AIDS and life skills education. Not only does it make the learners' views the key resource; it also encourages critical self-reflection, empathy and communication with others on issues that are rarely articulated. Furthermore, the experience of working in a single-sex group may encourage girls to be more outspoken in the mixed group discussions that follow. The Busia interviewers found that, in some of the mixed plenary sessions, the girls were as outspoken and critical as the boys - a fact they attributed to the confidence and support they had gained in the single-sex group.

In addition to the embarrassment that many teachers reported due to cultural prohibitions on adults and children discussing issues of sexuality, several other common problems were also identified in the development and teaching of HIV/AIDS education. Teachers seemed unclear about what life skills are, and how to teach them in relation to HIV/AIDS and life skills education. In Nakuru, teachers seemed to be unclear about how to teach life skills, regarding it as a discrete subject that should be covered in a few lessons, rather than an ongoing, long-term program. Most of those interviewed said they lacked the necessary skills to teach the subject. In Busia, teachers seemed uncomfortable talking about issues related to sex, raising strong concerns about their preparedness to deliver practical HIV/AIDS and life skills education. In Nakuru, the majority of the teachers interviewed felt they were not adequately prepared to teach about HIV/AIDS,

which was not included in their training curriculum. However, more than ninety of them said they were confident they could deliver HIV/AIDS lessons with information they had received through the media and anti-AIDS groups. The fact that teachers have to rely on the popular media for their training as HIV/AIDS educators is clearly a worrying situation.

According to some teachers, students themselves are quite hostile to HIV/AIDS education because they are suffering from what is sometimes called HIV/AIDS fatigue. This refers to a feeling of being so bombarded with messages about the horror of HIV/AIDS and images of death and suffering that they do not want to hear anything more about it. As the following teacher from Kisumu stated:

The students are always complaining that they are tired of HIV/AIDS because wherever they go there is HIV/AIDS – in the newspaper, on the television, is all HIV/AIDS. Some are saying we should not bother about HIV/AIDS because it is their business, not ours. Like last week, I called the drama group. The play was to be about HIV/AIDS. I did not tell them the theme, because I knew that if I mentioned HIV/AIDS, no one was going to turn up. I even told the teachers that they should not tell them that it was about HIV/AIDS. So they came. When they arrived and realized what we were going to deal with, some left the place . . . Whenever I came to teach them in Guidance and Counseling class, they would say, 'she is coming again to teach us about AIDS'. We normally go to them so that they choose topics that they want to learn about, in particular problems that affect them in school. But whenever we mention HIV/AIDS, they say that they don't want that one. They say, 'you go to Moral Education there is HIV/AIDS, you go to Religious Education there is HIV/AIDS, in the Guidance classes there is HIV/AIDS, on radio, on television . . . we are tired.'¹⁶⁷

In all the sites, teachers reported that parents oppose their children being educated on how to handle relationships with the opposite sex, and dismiss the idea of friendships between girls and boys as a foreign cultural phenomenon that encourages young people to engage in premarital sex.

¹⁶⁷Interviewed by author, Oral interview, St. Augustine High School, Kisumu, Kenya, June 2006.

Given the common taboos that surround talking about sexuality, especially between adults and children, it is clearly not easy to be an effective HIV/AIDS and life skills teacher. On the question of appropriate terminology, it may be that teachers can adapt and use the children's own words and phrases to describe sexual organs and sexual acts, as our interviewers did when interviewing younger youth. HIV/AIDS fatigue is a serious problem and may, as shown above, lead to young people rejecting HIV/AIDS education out of hand because they feel they are being overloaded with warnings through the media, their church or their school. The constant stream of gruesome images and warnings about engaging in sex of any kind may induce boredom at best, resentment at worst. It is extremely important that HIV/AIDS educators recognize this and try to develop HIV/AIDS programs that do not simply reproduce these feelings.¹⁶⁸

Such programs should not focus exclusively on HIV/AIDS nor on sex, but more generally on what it is like to be a young person in Kenya today. When the researcher adopted this approach in the study, the interviewees did not show signs of boredom or resentment, but rather were engaged, reflective and animated. This, of course, does not mean that the nature of HIV/AIDS and its modes of transmission should not be addressed in HIV/AIDS education. However, the focal point of HIV/AIDS education within a life skills framework should not be the disease itself, but the lives, identities and relationships (sexual and non-sexual) of young people. It is also important to convey this message to parents, to assuage their fears that HIV/AIDS education focuses purely on matters of sex.

Whenever possible, teachers should persuade parents of the need for HIV/AIDS education by appealing to the concerns that many of them have for their children in the

¹⁶⁸De Waal, A and Argenti, N. *Young Africa: Realising The Rights of Children and Youth* (Trenton N.J and Asmara, Eritrea. Justice Africa, Africa World Press Inc, 2002), 181-183.

light of the pandemic. The aim of HIV/AIDS education, it must be stressed, is not to encourage young people to engage in protected sex, but to help them form relationships and make decisions that will make them less vulnerable to contracting the disease. Many of the young people interviewed indicated that sex was generally a taboo topic between them and their parents, and expressed a strong desire for more open communication with their parents. While the researcher found sex to be an important subject in the lives of these young people – whether as a worry or a desire, whether they engaged in it or not – many of the parents the researcher spoke to denied associations of sex with childhood and even early adolescence. It is clearly vital that teachers encourage parents to think of their children as people who, like them, have sexual feelings. They need to be persuaded that, rather than transforming their children from innocent to sexual beings, HIV/AIDS education aims to encourage and enable them to talk openly about their anxieties, concerns and pleasures, some of which relate to sexuality. Mitigating against the possibilities of teaching HIV/AIDS education in a learner centered way are material and logistical difficulties, such as the limited time allocated to the subject and large class sizes. It was reported that girls and boys sat two or three to a desk in classes of fifty to sixty students. Clearly, this is not conducive to learning, especially where teachers want to put the onus on students as active participants. In Kisumu, HIV/AIDS lessons generally last for five to ten minutes and are taught once a week. The teachers claim to cover topics on the causes, transmission and prevention of HIV/AIDS, as well as issues of friendship, drug abuse and other STIs. It is clearly difficult, if not impossible, to generate the kind of student led discussions required in such a limited timeframe. In the

study interviews, the richest discussions emerged when the interviewees were given sufficient scope and time (at least thirty minutes) to talk about themselves and others.

Talking about their sexual feelings, concerns and relations with adults was something that was impossible for most of the young interviewees who spoke about their relations with adults. In Nakuru, the majority of youth reported that they seldom shared their worries on issues related to sexual matters with their parents. Instead, they were much more likely to share such information with their friends. Many interviewees said their parents were hostile to discussing sex-related matters. In all sites, parents did not discuss sex with their children except in a negative sense and in the context of rebuke. Grandmothers, who in many cases took on the role of guardians, especially in rural areas, were often closer to children than their parents. Both boys and girls appeared more easily able to discuss issues that concerned them with their grandmothers. Many said they wanted to discuss issues related to sexuality with their parents or guardians, but could not because they were too old fashioned or unwilling to discuss such matters. Both boys and girls portrayed their fathers as emotionally and physically distant figures compared to their mothers. In Busia, fathers, like male teachers, were criticized for being hypocritical and for taking moralistic stances on issues of sexuality. Boys both identified with their fathers as powerful and were critical of them for being distant and unfaithful. Fathers in urban areas were usually busy and preoccupied with other engagements. In rural areas, mothers were responsible for communicating with their children and advocating on their behalf to their fathers. Fathers were often constructed simply as providers, who occasionally discussed issues such as school fees – but never issues to do with friends, anxieties, pleasures or relationships. Fathers were rarely mentioned in the young

people's diaries. By contrast, mothers featured prominently, particularly in the diaries kept by girls, who wrote things such as:

- Tila: My mother took me and my younger brother to town.
 Nabwire: I am happy about mother's birthday.
 Nasimiyu: I told my mother about running into a tree trunk.
 Getty: My mum plaiting my hair and my sister's hair...
 Tila: My mother's pleased with me because of my knowledge of algebra.¹⁶⁹

Boys were generally less close to their mothers than girls, and were not able to speak with their mothers in the same way. It may be then that, for most boys, there are fewer adults available than for girls to talk about matters of sexuality. In Nakuru, girls and boys with a resident father viewed their fathers as providers of basic needs, such as accommodation and education. Fathers were also constructed as people who guided mainly their sons against bad behavior, such as roaming around. However, both the girls and boys described their mothers as more available for advice and guidance. For example, several boys described their mothers counseling them about how to become responsible men: to come home at night, to help in housework, and to avoid bad company. Some of the girls claimed that their fathers advised them not to wear bad clothes such as miniskirts, in order to minimize the risk of sexual harassment. However, during the individual interviews and girl-only discussions, several of them also accused their fathers of abuse through overwork and beatings by saying:

- Ciku: I do not like my father, and don't stay with him. He beats me and makes noise everytime.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁹Diary excerpts, Esifugwe School, Busia, Kenya, May 2006.

¹⁷⁰Interviewed by author, Oral Interviews, Nakuru High School, Nakuru, Kenya, June 2006.

Some of the Nakuru girls even expressed fear of incestuous advances from their fathers. Many young people also openly admitted to being abused in their families, notably by their stepfathers. A number of boys wrote negatively about their stepfathers in their diaries, saying things like:

- Gichinga: My stepfather annoyed me yet again. I won't be responsible for my actions.
 Steven: Someone should teach him how to carry his drink – he reminded me that I don't belong to the family. If I was not at school I would leave.
 Taki: I'm lucky I do not have a stepfather YET.¹⁷¹

In Nakuru, mothers claimed to take responsibility for teaching their children about sexual relationships and HIV/AIDS. The girls confirmed this claim, with some of them saying that their mothers allowed them to have boyfriends as long as they did not become involved in sexual relationships. All of the girls felt that this was good advice, as their mothers were cautioning them and preparing them for the future. A thirteen year-old schoolgirl said her mother provided what she considered 'good advice, because boys can rape you.' Boys also supported the education provided by their mothers, as noted in the following remarks:

- Owino: Girls should be very careful and avoid being cheated by boys for money.
 Kagai: Mothers know what they are saying as they have passed through that stage.¹⁷²

Both school-going and non-school-going boys and girls said the information they received on sexuality at home was helpful because it helped them avoid situations that could lead to contracting HIV/AIDS. Based on such information, girls said they learned

¹⁷¹Ibid.

¹⁷²Ibid.

what constituted good and bad behavior and could make informed decisions and avoid bad company or situations. However, some non-school-going girls claimed that they did not want to hear anything about sexuality, as they were still too young. The few parents who reportedly discussed sexuality issues with their children, said they generally addressed issues of STIs, HIV/AIDS, menstruation, and the breaking of boys' voices. They also stressed the avoidance of pregnancy, even threatening dire consequences as one mother stated, "I tell them that if you give birth, it is your problem to take care of (the baby) and not me."

While girls may have been much closer to their mothers than boys and more able, perhaps, to share their emotions with them, parents also appeared to focus on their daughters' – rather than their sons' – sexuality, and in ways that strongly restricted them.

This was particularly the case in rural Busia, where many parents opposed girls mixing with boys, let alone having boyfriends. Schoolgirls here reported that some parents feared that once their daughters were in school, they would be exposed to boys. Hence, as girls approached puberty, they were withdrawn from school or even married off. Those few girls attending primary school associated going to school with freedom and saw themselves as heroines. One of the main fears was that the girls would get pregnant and bring shame upon the family. Parents in Busia were reportedly uneasy about girls sharing classrooms with boys. They favored segregation and wanted separate classrooms for boys and girls in order to prevent sexual relationships. Those mothers interviewed claimed that they did not teach sexuality matters to their daughters, let alone educate them on their sexual rights as enshrined in many traditional cultural codes of conduct. This traditional code holds that any word uttered by a woman against a man is

final, and various sanctions can be administered against a man for touching a woman without her consent. However, the assumptions underlying this code – that females are at risk from predatory males – appear to reinforce parents' views that they must protect their daughters by restricting their interactions with boys. While indeed sexual harassment is a common feature of school life, it is girls rather than the offending males who are victimized and withdrawn – making schools even more threatening and unsafe places for girls. Yet, despite this, diary entries written by the students about their future showed that girls also want to complete school and take up professional careers – just as much as any boy.

One of the problems that HIV/AIDS and life skills educators face – as was observed in all study sites – is the widespread perception that such education violates traditional practices, particularly when it espouses the rights of girls and women. However, the researcher contends that what are perceived as traditional values may be reconciled with a commitment to girls' and women's rights. Rather than interpreting the traditional cultural code as indicating that girls and women are weak and need to be controlled and regulated (by being kept at home and denied schooling) to protect them from predatory males, the code could be interpreted much more positively and progressively by educators. For example, educationists could build a case for HIV/AIDS education with a gender and sexual politics component by locating it within a localized history of gender relations as an assertion of female rights to education and free movement.

The parents interviewed seemed to be far more concerned about their daughters than their sons as sexual beings. When asked about what, if anything, they told their

children about sex, it was striking how they spoke only about their daughters. They were not simply presenting facts about their daughters' burgeoning sexuality, but actively sexualizing them – constructing them as objects of desire and, having *made* sexuality a key aspect of their identity, setting out to protect them by controlling and regulating their behavior. The teachers' comments included statements as:

- Mr. Mumia: Yes, we do talk to them that it is bad to have sex before marriage.
- Ms. Muyodi: Yes, because traditionally we have to do that in order for our children to have proper marriages.
- Ms. Bilamu: When the girls come of age, we start teaching them to stay away from men, even boys. We tell them to be afraid of them because they have diseases.
- Mr. Muyodi: Most girls are not jumpy at fourteen years. They just learn from boys in school and then they want to try what they learned. Long ago, when a boy went to a girl, the girl was taught that boys bite and when they bite, you instantly die...
- Mr. Mumia: We have to tell our children that if you sleep around with men, you will become pregnant, contract diseases like STDs and HIV/AIDS. We even give them examples of people who are still suffering . . .
- Interviewer: Mr. Ali, what things have you highlighted to your children on sexuality?
- Mr. Ali: There are times when these girls grow up . . . they experience natural development in the body. When they reach such a level, they have to know that, once they meet a boy or a man, of course there are certain things which they are to expect – like a pregnancy... or sometimes it couldn't be pregnancy, but they may contract a disease¹⁷³

These parents are sexualizing girls and demonizing boys as disease carriers, as people that *bite*. Far from influencing their daughters to mix responsibly with boys, they are encouraging them to hate boys and to remain protected from them. When Mr. Muyodi describes girls of today as easily influenced by boys in school and contrasts them with girls of long ago, he seems to be invoking a common discourse that constructs

¹⁷³Interviewed by author, Oral Interviews, Esifugwe community center, Busia, Kenya, May 2006.

females – but not males – as vulnerable to corruption by modernization. The same is true of concerns voiced by many of the parents about the effects of modern schooling on their daughters. Significantly, there is absolutely no sense of girls being active agents in this account of girls long ago and in contemporary society; they are spoken about either as the pawns of authoritarian figures or, with the presumed erosion of this authority, as being easily manipulated by boys.

Female Sexuality

Gender power relations are produced and negotiated, through the sexualization of girls at school and at home. This is a highly problematic issue, which affects girls' relationships with boys, other girls and teachers, and makes it difficult for them to develop friendships or equal relationships with males, and creates divisions between good and bad girls that result in the regulation of their behavior. In relation to this, girls are marginalized in HIV/AIDS and life skills classes, as well as in anti-AIDS groups.

Gender power relations are complex, and readers must be sensitive to the different ways in which people respond to them. For instance, some girls collude in the reproduction of their lack of power – while some develop forms of resistance to it. The silence of most of the girls in class, while boys dominate proceedings, can be seen as a form of collusion in the sense that it enables the boys to be dominant. However, it can also be seen as a strategy that girls adopt to protect themselves from potential abuse from boys, or even as a form of resistance against a male dominated classroom. A simple binary model representing boys as the powerful oppressors and girls as powerless victims not only fails to address the various ways in which girls actively negotiate gender power relations, but contributes to the view that girls are passive. Furthermore, it fails to examine how boys

negotiate gender power relations, and the kind of problems that may arise for them in competition with other boys as they try to assert themselves.

The study examined the sorts of problems that girls and boys claim most commonly to experience, focusing more on boys' problems because the emphasis so far has been on girls' problems. In addition, focusing on boys' problems challenges the stereotype of males as free and autonomous (and females as passive, helpless victims). Such stereotypes were seen as emanating from their relations with men and boys. Many boys in the study defined themselves by subordinating girls – presenting themselves as physically and emotionally stronger than girls, and as active, loud, funny, naughty, free and sexually rapacious by comparison. While the boys presented themselves as more powerful in these ways, some of the mainly female interviewees intimated that, in being expected to be like this, boys were in a sense lacking power. They pointed out that many boys experienced problems stemming directly from their efforts to live up to the stereotype of the powerful male. For this reason, the researcher would argue strongly for boys problems' to be incorporated into the agenda of all HIV/AIDS and life skills education.

In the three study sites, almost all the girls' groups identified sexual harassment as the most pressing problem faced by girls as captured in the following comments:

After male grandparents or stepfathers pay for school fees, they want sex from you in return.

A teacher starts giving you more marks, invites you to his home and asks for a sexual favor. If you refuse . . . you get to be a victim in class.

When you are junior, seniors eat your food, use your money and clothes. They also inflict mental torture by saying things about your body if you are not pretty.

Bus drivers . . . use abusive language and ask for sex instead when you have no money to pay.

Bus conductors or *matatu* touts touch you and make you feel uncomfortable. They use offensive language. They also favor you by not making you pay the fare.¹⁷⁴

Another issue of concern raised by the girls was being treated as the weaker sex, and how this affected the ways that teachers treated them and ridiculed their future job prospects. Specifically they referred to the following concerns:

- Both male and female teachers have a negative attitude against the girls. They say boys are brighter or cleverer than girls and treat them as such.
- Women are given lower jobs than men, like teaching and nursing.
- Parents discourage girls from striving for higher ambitions on the account that “you are a girl”.
- Where there are men, they will always be appointed for higher posts.
- Very few women are in high positions on (a) comparative basis.¹⁷⁵

When asked to identify the problems that girls commonly experienced, the boys focused on sexuality. Girls were regarded as sexually disadvantaged because they were identified with unwanted pregnancies, rape, prostitution, early marriages and sexual abuse. Boys also referred to the problems that girls faced as a result of being seen as the weaker sex – in particular restrictions on their movements, low academic expectations, and being considered less powerful than boys.

¹⁷⁴Excerpts from focus group discussions, Nakuru High School, Nakuru, Kenya, May 2006.

¹⁷⁵Ibid.

Male Sexuality

The key problems identified by girls about boys revolved around the economic responsibilities they were expected to fulfill, the better exam marks they were expected to achieve, their presumed susceptibility to peer pressure, their presumed physical toughness and sexual proclivity, and their relative detachment from their mothers and fathers.

These were well stated by the girls as in the following comments:

Boys' inability to express themselves, especially when they are under the guidance of the mother only.

Peer pressure – boys influenced into smoking, drinking and dodging classes.

Boys are not allowed to enter their parents' bedroom, while girls are allowed. So boys feel that they are not really loved by their parents.

Boys being shy when it comes to discussing sexuality with their parents, and, in particular, their mothers.

Boys face problems at home in a situation where they are considered stronger than girls. They are always given hard jobs to do and even when they can't do it, they will just continue because their parent commanded them to do so.

When he gets married, he faces problems of looking after his family. Unemployment and school dropout makes a man unable to support his family when he gets married.

Boys being teased by other boys and girls for being physically small, as well as having a small penis.

It is very painful to be beaten on the buttocks. It is not fair for the boys; we are in the same class, and we do the same things. Many teachers hate boys. It seems the teachers suppose that the boys do not feel the same pain (as the girls). If a boy refuses to be beaten on the buttocks and asks to be beaten on the hand like the girls, he is told that he will be taken to the staff room and be beaten there – or he has to go out of the class. So, in the class, girls are treated with higher regard than boys.

One time, the teacher gave back our test papers and said that the girls had performed better than the boys. She told the boys she was going to beat them because they were not supposed to be led by girls – and she went ahead and beat them.¹⁷⁶

In all the study sites, rather surprisingly perhaps, given how the boys prided themselves in being free and subordinated girls as people who were tied to the home, some teenaged boys complained about their parents favoring their sisters over them.

They stated:

Fred: If you have a sister, when she asks for money from your parents, they just give it to her without asking any questions. All she does is state how much she wants and she gets it. But for me, a boy, I have to explain and usually they don't give me the cash. They would rather buy me what I want than give me the money.

Sunny: My parents expect a lot from me. When I get what I call my best results, they still expect me to have done better, so we have problems. If I try to explain, they won't listen. They simply accuse me of being playful in school. I think they expect too much from me.

Cliff: In my family, I talk to my sisters and we go around together. But the way we are treated is different. The girls are regarded highly and us boys are simply brushed aside as being a mischievous lot. Even though my sisters are as mischievous as the boys, it's never discovered.

Many boys and girls in the study complained that boys were much more likely to be beaten by teachers, and were beaten more harshly – for example, on the buttocks rather than the palms of the hands. What is notable about the boys' problems is that they all relate to difficulties that boys have of living up to the stereotypes of being strong, tough and clever. These stereotypes give rise to the following common problems.

- Because boys are expected to be clever at school, they are often blamed by their parents for not doing as well as expected – and are beaten by some teachers for not doing better than girls;
- Because they are expected to be big, small boys are often teased for being small;

¹⁷⁶Excerpts from focus group discussions, Oral Interviews, Esifugwe community center, Busia, St. Augustine High School, Kisumu and Nakuru High School, Nakuru Kenya, May 2006.

- Because they are supposed to be very sexual, they may be teased for having small penises;
- Because they are expected to become the breadwinners and heads of their houses, they may be blamed for being unemployed;
- Because they are expected to be emotionally strong, they may be less able to express their emotions with their parents, their teachers and even their girlfriends;
- Because they are expected to be physically tough, they are more likely to be given hard jobs to do;
- Because they are expected to show independence, they may be influenced into doing harmful things, such as smoking, drinking and playing truant;
- Because they are expected to be naughtier than girls, they are more likely to be punished and less likely to be given money by their parents;
- Because they are expected to be physically strong, they are more likely to compete with other boys through fighting.

Rather than regarding masculinity and femininity as if there is only one way of being male and one way of being female – on the assumption that we are born with either male or female characteristics – many contemporary writers argue that there are different and changing ways of being male and female. The gender theorist Robert Connell argues that not only are there different kinds of masculine identities, but also that these are ranked hierarchically. His description of hegemonic masculinity refers to the dominant cultural stereotype of masculinity, which is associated with toughness, heterosexual attraction, confidence, aggression and sporting prowess.¹⁷⁷ As seen in the study, many boys identify with these ideals and perform their gender by asserting themselves and subordinating girls. Connell warns that these hegemonic ideals are fantasies to which men and boys are encouraged to aspire, but which few are actually able to attain. He suggests that such ideals impose unrealistic expectations upon boys and men, leading to

¹⁷⁷Robert W. Connell. "The Social Organization of Masculinities" in *Masculinities* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 67-86.

frustration and anxiety for many – and leading to some boys being picked on by others for being subordinate and falling short of particular ideals.

It is important that, in addressing issues like sexual harassment or the exploitation of girls, HIV/AIDS and life skills programs do not simply criticize boys. This would have the effect of further alienating boys from girls. Rather, these programs should aim to encourage boys to reflect upon the problems that *they* experience in trying to define themselves as tough, highly sexual, macho and dominant, in opposition to girls. Life skills education should focus not only on the problems that girls face as a result of boys distancing themselves from their versions of femininity and trying to live up to cultural stereotypes of tough men, but on the difficulties that these expectations present to boys – and the competition that they generate between them.

Some boys became very angry when they were challenged by girls asserting their rights to move freely and dump boyfriends who abuse them. This confirms how threatened many boys feel by assertive girls. Rather than simply attacking boys for becoming more macho and aggressive in response to this perceived threat, HIV/AIDS educators should try to explore with boys why they feel so threatened, and why they are so invested in distancing themselves from their versions of femininity. This may open the way for discussing alternative, less restrictive and less anxiety-provoking ways of being boys, which are not predicated on opposition to girls' and boys' versions of femininity. The possibility of boys and girls identifying in ways that allow them to relate to each other as friends – rather than as opposites with little in common – should be an important component of any practical and effective HIV/AIDS education program.

Male/Female Relationships

The researcher was interested in exploring the possibilities of friendships between girls and boys because of the overwhelming number of interviewees who described themselves as opposites with nothing at all in common. Due to the deep entrenchment of the gender stereotypes described previously, the researcher found that being seen as weak creates problems for girls, just as being seen as strong creates problems for boys. For this reason, there is clearly a fundamental need to bridge this gender gap, and bring boys and girls together on an equal footing – as friends. The researcher would argue that this objective should form a core component of a responsible HIV/AIDS and life skills program. Most of the young people interviewed reported having close friends of the same sex, but only very few said they had close friends of the opposite sex. One of the reasons given for this was precisely that they had so little in common, and would find it difficult spending time together. The following girls from Kisumu, commented on how differently they acted with boys than with girls, and how this made it difficult for them to become friends with boys, stating:

- | | |
|---------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Anne: | It is different. When I am with boys, they never talk about love affairs, whereas girls are always talking about boys. |
| Sophie: | Yes, it's different. When I am with girls, we quarrel about petty things, but with boys, they never really talk. They use their hands fists to beat and communicate. |
| Caro: | I never relate with boys, but I guess it's different because I am much more at ease with girls. Boys are very rough. They do not know how to relate and talk. I never relate with boys at home and in school... because they are rude (and) sometimes they remain quiet. ¹⁷⁸ |

Some boys in Nakuru seemed to agree with these girls that boys were rough and difficult to talk to. While most of the boys generally spoke in derogatory ways about

¹⁷⁸Interviewed by author, Oral Interviews, St. Augustine High School, Kisumu, Kenya, June 2006.

girls - accusing them of being fickle, not having a mind of their own, and being less intelligent than boys - as many as six of the ten boys interviewed praised girls for the sound advice that they offered and their sympathetic natures. These boys said they found it easier to confide in girls or to befriend them. Across the board, this was more the exception than the rule. As fourteen year-old Kagai, said, “. . . if I stay out with boys or I am naughty, the girl will say ‘what you are doing is wrong’ – but not the boys. Girls advise you, so it’s good to play with girls.”

Some of these boys actually preferred girls’ to boys’ company – at least on some occasions. They extended these feelings to female teachers, who were said to be better listeners than male teachers, to be more sympathetic, and to offer better advice. It would seem that this idealization of girls and women reflects some dissatisfaction with popular ways of being boys and males in general.¹⁷⁹ It may be though that in these friendships boys and girls were not equal, and that girls were helping boys more than the boys were helping them. Furthermore, by idealizing girls in this way, more was expected of them than of the boys – a position that, the researcher would suggest, was not very positive for the girls. Another reason it seemed that so few of the interviewees had close friends of the opposite sex was the common assumption that boys and girls who were seen together must be boyfriends and girlfriends. This emerged in the following discussion about mixing girls and boys in Busia:

Interviewer: Is there anything different in the way that you interact with boys and girls?

¹⁷⁹Susan Frosh et al. *Young Masculinities: Understanding Boys in Contemporary Society* (London: Palgrave, 2002).

- Omari: I see no difference, but the only problem is the belief that if people see you with a girl, then they think that's your girlfriend. So I don't feel comfortable, but there is no difference...
- Musa: I see a big difference with girls. There are some issues that you can't discuss with her but only with your boyfriends.
- Chanzu: I see no difference between boys and girls... I discuss private things with girls – for example, what I do during the holidays, watching movies like horrors and love movies. I find it easier talking to a girl I know has a boyfriend.
- Peter: I think getting along with girls is good, but you can have problems in the future when you get married. Your wife may be jealous because of your habit of getting along with many girls. So I think the point is not to get along with women too much. Women cannot keep secrets, so this can have a bad effect on your marriage.¹⁸⁰

What is interesting about this excerpt is that, while three of the boys (Omari, Chanzu and Peter) suggest that it is relatively easy to get on with girls – and that there are no major differences between them – they all refer to difficulties that arise from the *belief that if people see you with a girl, then they think that's your girlfriend*. Omari does not feel comfortable in the company of a girl because of what other people may read into their relationship. This is also why Chanzu finds it easier talking to a girl he knows has a boyfriend, and why Peter expresses only qualified support for getting along with girls.

In the following excerpt, girls aged thirteen and fourteen were asked if they played with boys just as they played with girls. They appeared surprised to be asked such a question, and were quick to deny that they played with boys stating:

- All: No! (Surprised tone)
- Chichi: We can't play the same way because the boys have feelings and they may end up doing what they are not supposed to do.
(Laughter)
- Interviewer: What kind of feelings? (More laughter)
- Dina: I think the kinds of feelings are touching each other, caressing and kissing.
- Interviewer: Don't girls have feelings?

¹⁸⁰Interviewed by author, Oral Interviews, Esifugwe School, Busia, Kenya, May 2006.

Chichi: They do, but boys and girls should not be too close, touching . .

. Interviewer: But we are talking about boys who are just friends!

Nabwire: Ah, but they are the same (laughter), and the end result will be . . .

Even though the interviewer asked about playing with boys whom she stressed were just friends, the girls still suggested that the boys would have sexual feelings. The girls seemed to be saying that it was impossible for girls and boys to have friendships because of boys' sexual feelings. Only when pressed by the interviewer did they admit that they also had sexual feelings, although they were clearly constructing boys as the subjects and girls as the objects of sexual desire. In this way, they also presented boys as potentially naughty in relation to them, *they may end up doing what they are not supposed to do*. As good girls, they need to protect themselves from boys, whom they stereotype as sexually motivated and naughty opposites. Significantly, there is much laughter when the girls are speaking about the boys' feelings. No doubt this reflects embarrassment and implies that the girls share these feelings – but are not supposed to articulate them.

In Kisumu, eighth grade girls reported mixing only with girls in order to deter boys from enticing them to have sex with them. As Caro, one of the girls said, "Girls fear boys because of their behavior of initiating sexual relationships." They constructed boys as bad and the possessors of powerful sex drives – and themselves, by contrast, as non-sexual. Yet, ironically, they were also drawing attention to themselves as sexual beings by not mixing with members of the opposite sex because it would be construed as bad manners. Notably, both girls and boys in all the sites argued that academic assistance, especially from boy classmates, was the main reason that boys and girls associated in school. In such relationships, boys were positioned as powerful and

intelligent. The interviewees described how they worked with people of the opposite sex, making it clear that this excluded any kind of attraction. Only in this context did they think it was legitimate for boys and girls to mix, even though some girls still claimed to feel uncomfortable in the company of boys. They observed that such closeness could be misconstrued as implying sexual attraction, which would consequently dent their image as good girls.

Most of the young people in Busia were strict Muslims, in whose culture mixing between boys and girls was discouraged on religious grounds. Fifteen-year-old, Maryam, said she felt afraid “when I see boys and girls walking together, because it is not allowed my religion.” The girls and boys were expected to grow up separately until marriage. When he was asked about girl-boy friendships, fourteen year-old Khalid denied outright the possibility of such relationships, stating:

Interviewer: How is the relationship between boys and girls?

Khalid: Boys and girls, no relationships. Parents of girls beat them if they go with boys...

Interviewer: Why is that so?

Khalid: Parents don't like them to walk together.¹⁸¹

As discussed earlier, many girls reported parents withdrawing their daughters from school as they approached puberty because they did not want them to mix with boys. Some Muslim girls seemed surprised that the interviewers even dared to enquire about their relationships with boys. The interviewers responded by asking similar questions in different ways, emphasizing that they were not insinuating the existence of the boy-girl friendships that were forbidden by their culture. Despite this assurance, however, many of the girls appeared reluctant to discuss issues regarding relationships

¹⁸¹Interviewed by author, Oral Interviews, Esifugwe School, Busia, Kenya, May 2006.

across the sexes, in many cases through spontaneous outright denials. A good example, was when Zainab, a fourteen year-old girl, was asked to describe how girls and boys related in her school, she answered curtly: "They don't relate!" A fifteen year-old schoolmate added, "... they don't relate except for academic purposes." Other girls said it was advisable to avoid relationships with boys because they were verbally abusive towards girls and women. One girl, Maryam, observed that even female teachers seemed powerless in the presence of boys' insulting behavior, and had to turn to the headmaster for help as stated in the following interview:

- Interviewer: What can you say about the relationship between boys and girls in school?
 Maryam: They (boys) abuse girls.
 Interviewer: Can you give examples?
 Maryam: *Wewe ni bibi yangu* (You are my wife).
 Interviewer: When and why do the boys abuse girls?
 Maryam: When I don't know certain subjects (i.e. I'm unable to answer a question), some boys abuse girls. (They) make dirty jokes ...
 Interviewer: What do the girls do about it?
 Maryam: Girls get annoyed and tell madam, who then tells the headmaster.
 Interviewer: Then what happens?
 Maryam: They are beaten in parade.

These girls were teased by their male classmates in ways that suggested that their value was only in their potential as wives. Given the implied sexual connotations, and the pressures on girls to avoid shame and to safeguard their family honor, it is reasonable to assume that the girls found these sexist jokes repugnant. Furthermore, as only 28 percent of the Busia school population comprises girls who are usually determined to benefit from their education, jokes from boys about being valued only as wives are probably perceived as a threat to their academic achievements and, by inference, to their future success in adulthood. During the focus group discussion in Nakuru, all of the girls

accused the boys of humiliating and embarrassing them by laughing about their growing breasts and hips, so much so that several of them claimed that they feared going to school. Instead of appreciating their changing bodies, the girls resorted to hiding their breasts with their sweaters to avoid attracting the attention of the boys or male teachers.

Sexual harassment, as mentioned, is a major problem for girls, and one that clearly reduces the possibilities of boys and girls establishing friendships with one another. While it is understandable why girls withdraw from boys to avoid sexual harassment, gender segregation on these grounds is unlikely to change the kinds of gender relations that give rise to sexual harassment in the first place. On the contrary, by not mixing socially with boys because of boys' presumed rapacious sexual nature, girls are contributing to the stereotypes of boys as strong, naughty and sexually active, and themselves as weak and passive objects of desire. Their parents, too, are exacerbating the situation by protecting them from boys, by restricting their movements, and even withdrawing them from school. Indeed, it is precisely because girls and boys are stereotyped in this way that sexual harassment occurs on the scale that the female interviewees suggested.

In contrast to the Muslim boys and girls in Busia, parish counselors from a church in Kisumu expressed a desire for boys and girls to mix. One of them, Sister Mary, argued that, far from promoting sexual relations between boys and girls, the effect of mixing the sexes during pastoral teaching was to remove sexual feelings between them, replacing them with a feeling of brotherliness and sisterhood. Sister Mary said she believed that if boys and girls came together as friends, sex would cease to be given such importance. She stated:

Now the boys and girls will have no feelings for each other . . . despite the fact that they are a boy and a girl. Now it is the same when you mix these boys and girls, you know that feeling goes away. They are now friends. We want to make them feel they are brothers and sisters, which should be the case. I remember when I was growing up . . . sorry to take you back some 50, 60 years (laughter) . . . we used to bathe with boys in a stream with no costumes and we didn't see each other's nakedness, because (of the way we) were brought up like. That is the culture we want to bring to these children . . . that there is really nothing peculiar or strange about each other. Yeah, that is my feeling.¹⁸²

As Sister Mary implies, by separating boys and girls so that they do not engage in sex, the relationship between them is actually constructed as essentially and only a sexual one. Hence segregating boys and girls, in her view, made them ultimately more likely to engage in sex when they did mix.

Questions about the possibilities of boy-girl friendships, what forms they take, how similar they can be to same-sex friendships, need to be given far greater prominence in HIV/AIDS and life skills education. Such relationships are clearly only possible if boys and girls become less invested in seeing and defining themselves in opposition to one another. They may also be less likely to do so if same-sex friendships are placed on the agenda of HIV/AIDS and life skills education. Many of the parents interviewed, particularly the Muslim parents, argued that gender segregation lessens the possibility of sexual relations between young people. However, this theory is problematic for three main reasons:

- It encourages boys and girls to construct themselves in stereotypically different ways from one another, which makes them vulnerable in different ways;
- Ironically, it succeeds in sexualizing any kind of relationship between boys and girls, as Sister Mary, intimated and finally;

¹⁸²Excerpt from focus group discussion, Kisumu social hall, Kisumu, Kenya, June 2006.

- It makes it difficult for young people, especially girls, to talk about sex, their desires and concerns, in addition to making communication with adults over these issues virtually impossible.

While HIV/AIDS and life skills education must challenge gender segregation and inequality, it is important that it is not evangelical in its approach to the extent of alienating parents. Teachers need to meet with parents to address their fears and discuss appropriate forms of HIV/AIDS and life skills education. In focusing upon the possibilities of friendships between girls and boys, the researcher is not advocating that HIV/AIDS and life skills education adopt a moralistic line and discourage boyfriend-girlfriend relations, or relations between boys and girls mediated by sexual desire. Rather it should aim to encourage young people to consider the possibilities of relating closely to people of the opposite sex as friends, not *just as* girlfriends or boyfriends. It must, of course, address the sexual harassment of girls as a serious problem, but in a way that challenges rather than reproduces stereotypes of boys as sexual aggressors and girls as passive objects.

Perceptions of Male Female Relationships

Given what the study found out about boys and girls not mixing and the relative absence of friendships between boys and girls, how do boys and girls actually become boyfriends and girlfriends? When they do, how do they get along? In the interviews, the view often emerged that boys have much stronger sexual feelings than those of girls. This profoundly affects not only the kinds of relationships that young boys and girls can have, or imagine having, but also how they speak about these relationships. When boys and girls were asked about what influenced young people to engage in sex, the boys

usually spoke about beautiful girls arousing their desires, whereas girls were said, by both boys and girls, to be more influenced by the material benefits that may accrue from such relationships. The following excerpt comes from an interview with a mixed sex group interview in Nakuru:

Interviewer: What situations can lead you and other people to sexual acts?

Steven: Girls look beautiful.

Jackie: Because we need money . . .

Sunny: Girls wearing miniskirts.

Warui: Just the feeling . . .

Owino: The way girls move.

Mukiri: Naturally girls are attractive.

Florence: The perfume boys wear.

Nancy: Love of money by some girls.

Mbui: For some, it's just a habit of having sex.¹⁸³

These comments suggest that, not only are boys powerful and sexually active, but that they have the financial power to buy sex. While several of the boys interviewed joked and boasted about how many girlfriends they had had, hardly any girls spoke about their boyfriends, let alone having sex with them. There were striking similarities in the kind of gendered positions that boys and girls were taking up in relationships at this age with those they were adopting at later ages, notably boys asking to have sex with girls and doing chores for them or giving gifts in return.

When boys and girls in Busia and Kisumu were asked about the kinds of girlfriends and boyfriends they imagined having in the future, boys mentioned physical beauty as well as goodness as important attributes of girlfriends, while girls wanted boyfriends who were working and in a strong financial position. This indeed suggests that girlfriends may gratify boys' sexual desires in exchange for material goods – the

¹⁸³Excerpts from focus group discussions, Nakuru High School, Nakuru, Kenya, July 2006.

assumption being, of course, that boys are sexually desiring beings and girls are objects of their desire. In a session, "What Boys want from a Girlfriend," the boys aged between sixteen to eighteen years had the following to say:

- Konje: A girl who loves me for what I am, not what I have. The girl should be pretty and have nice straight legs. The girl should be well behaved, not very talkative.
- Edward: Should be open, trustworthy and have widened hips and nice buttocks and breasts.
- Omari: She should be pretty, have a good attitude, and have inner beauty.
- Jimmie: My girlfriend should be intelligent and beautiful.¹⁸⁴

On their part, the girls too had some interesting comments in their session "What Girls Look for in a Boyfriend" stating:

- Tukio: I would look for one who is working . . . otherwise there will be problems.
- Nabii: Working, honest and also smart.
- Nasimiyu: Yes, one who is working, but he must also be able to plan for a future.
- Nabii: A guy who is not cruel to others, is sociable, and does not have other girlfriends.
- Nancy: A smart guy in dressing and behavior.¹⁸⁵

Many boys said they looked for good girls as girlfriends, in other words, girls who were not loud and sexual, as they expected boys to be. Many of the interviewees structured girlfriend-boyfriend relationships around boys' power as sexual beings and as economic providers. The assumption that boys were buyers and girls sellers of sex created conflict and resentment between some girls and boys, with the boys complaining that girls were only interested in them for their money, and girls protesting that boys were bribing them to have sex by buying them gifts. The discussion went as follows:

¹⁸⁴Excerpts from focus group discussions, Esifugwe School, Busia, Kenya, June and July 2006.

¹⁸⁵Ibid.

- Wekesa: Some of the girls are just time pushers. They just waste your time. All they want is your money and so they look for a boy who has money. All girls just want money.
- Sunny: Boys call girls *parasites* but they go out with boys . . . They know that the man has to provide. He has to have money.
- Chanzu: Some use presents (gifts) as a trap to take the girl to bed. The girl after receiving all these feels that she owes the boy something. Girls like flashy cars and all such things. A guy may come with a BMW (and) she will say, 'Wow! I will go out with this guy. Then she will get into the car, and end up going out with the guy.'
- Sophie: The boy gives the girl money, dates her, buys her chocolates. Some chocolates when you get someone to buy for you, you feel high, feel loved.
- Njeri: For most people, the gifts are a form of bribery to have sex with them. If one does not agree to sex, she feels that the boy may think that she does not love him, she just wanted his presents.
- Robbie: Yes, the giving of presents is a way of securing the love relationship. People are afraid that if they do not give their girlfriends some presents, the girlfriends will abandon them or they will not allow them to kiss them.¹⁸⁶

While these girls see boys' gifts as expressions of their power and bribes for sexual relations, Robbie also implies that boys' tendency towards such bribery suggests a *lack* of power. They are giving out gifts, she says, because they fear their girlfriends will abandon them. The boys, too, suggest that boys and men lack power, characterizing girlfriends as parasites who drain their resources, and boys and men as their inevitable hosts. The assumption that girls want boys as providers is taken as a source of boys' power, as well as a cause for some anxiety, as we see in the following excerpts from interviews with boys in Kisumu:

- Interviewer: What type of boyfriend do you think girls like?
- Henry: I think those who have money . . . because if you have money they flock to you.

¹⁸⁶Excerpts from focus group discussions, Esifugwe school, Busia, St. Augustine High School, Kisumu, and Nakuru High School, Nakuru, Kenya, May, June and July 2006.

Ouma: A girlfriend who doesn't want to squander . . . must know I am not working and so where do I get money from? Otherwise, I may end up stealing so as to get money . . . ¹⁸⁷

While Henry wants a girlfriend who will not be a drain on his financial resources, he nonetheless sees himself as someone who, if he was working, would be the main provider. The anxieties that many boys feel about being viewed as potential providers often causes them to distinguish between a materialistic and a romanticized version of love, with the former seen as unauthentic and the latter as real. It is always girls who are blamed in these accounts for loving un-authentically or for material gain. In the following mixed interview with sixteen to eighteen year-olds in Nakuru, a boy named Mukiri is concerned about having nothing materially to offer girls, and so wants a girl to just love me and not the material things. All the interviewees expressed a commitment to authentic love in this sense. It would, of course, have been virtually impossible for any girl to say publicly that they prioritized love of material things over love for a boyfriend as the basis for the kind of relationship they sought. This would have invited accusations that they were bad, and prostituting themselves, which all the girls made every effort to steer clear from. The boys stated:

Mukiri: I think even before I get into a relationship I have to tell that person my status, like I tell her that I have nothing to offer where material things are concerned and that she should love me the way I am. She should just love me and not just the things that I give her or the way I flatter her and stuff like that; but she should just love me and not the material things or money.

Warui: But some girls love a boy for what he is, not what he is for. What I mean is like when . . . maybe a guy is rich and that kind of stuff, girls will maybe even love him for that but maybe for just the materials. Those situations happen and are happening right now!

Jane: That doesn't mean you love the person. You're just following a person for the material things that he has. If someone is rich and

¹⁸⁷Interviewed by author, Oral interviews, St. Augustine High School, Kisumu, Kenya, June 2006.

you are the girlfriend just because he is rich, then it means that's not love.¹⁸⁸

While boys derive power as boyfriends and providers, this, carries obligations, and is often regarded by boys as hard work. As Chanzu in Busia, complained, "We went out for about two months . . . in the two months she would say 'I want this' and I would run around. In time, I realized it's problematic because what she wants you must do."

An alternative and popular way of being a boy or young man involved refuting obligations, which tied them to particular girls, and deriving a sense of power through being hedonistic and free and having multiple relations.¹⁸⁹ Some sixteen to eighteen year-old boys from Nakuru seemed to derive much pleasure from talking explicitly about their multiple sexual relations and about how they deceived girls. Far from talking about their obligations to girlfriends, they spoke about how they enjoyed themselves precisely by deceiving them and taking advantage of them. Many of these boys boasted of having more than one girlfriend, and were encouraged to do so by the other boys' laughter. The girls present did not challenge the boys, presumably because they were so loud and assertive, but much more significantly was that they did not join in the laughter. The boys went on to state:

- Interviewer: Boys, is this a fact – that you are having several girlfriends?
 Chege: Yes, it's happening. If I go out with three girlfriends, when I am with one, if the others see me with the others, I simply tell her she is my sister or aunt. That way I would have lied to her.
 Interviewer: Can you tell us about your girlfriends?
 Wekesa: I have none that I can really call special.

¹⁸⁸Excerpts from focus group discussions, Nakuru High School, Nakuru, Kenya, July 2006.

¹⁸⁹Robert Pattman. "The Beer Drinkers Say I had a Nice prostitute but the Church Goers Talk About Things Spiritual – Learning to be Men at a Teachers' College in Zimbabwe" In *Changing Men in Southern Africa* edited by Morell, R. London: Zed Press, 2002; _____ *Men Make a Difference: The Construction of Gendered Student Identities at the University of Botswana. Agenda No. 53, Special Issue on Education, Youth and HIV/AIDS, (2002).*

- Interviewer: Are you suggesting that you have several?
 Wekesa: Yes, several. My girlfriends are those I spend time with and they are . . . urr . . . the ones I sometimes fondle and take them to bed. (Group laughter).¹⁹⁰

Boys were much more likely to talk about girls in derogatory or impersonal ways when being interviewed in groups rather than when being interviewed individually. In single-sex interviews, for example, some boys boasted about sleeping with and dumping girls, yet in the individual interviews they kept quiet about this. In the single sex interviews they expressed highly romanticized accounts of their girlfriends or potential girlfriends, as well as heartrending accounts about being dumped by them. These were conspicuous by their absence in the group interviews. The following are some examples of the Kisumu boys' accounts:

- Henry: You won't believe what I saw, neither did I – I saw an angel, she looked like heaven on earth, every boy's dream. I don't even know her name but I know she is wonderful, but she was everything a healthy guy can wish for.
- Francis: I just stayed at home thinking about what happened between me and the girl I love. My heart was broken and I thought it would break into pieces. She was my one and only lover. She was one in a million, my number one priority.
- Louis: I was disappointed by the bad news she told me. She told me that she did not love me anymore. I thought of slapping her, but I did not see any use in hurting her, so I left her and went home. She is the only girl I truly love. She has all the qualities I need in my dream girl.
- Chima: I must say she is beautiful. I watch her until it popped into my head that if I could make her mine this would make me happy. It was the first time I even wanted someone so much.¹⁹¹

Like some of the boys, many girls said they were opposed to having boyfriend-girlfriend relationships at their age because it would distract from their schoolwork.

¹⁹⁰ Excerpts from focus group discussions, Nakuru High School, Nakuru, Kenya, July 2006.

¹⁹¹ Excerpts from focus group discussions, St. Augustine High School, Kisumu, Kenya, June 2006.

Unlike the boys, however, they also mentioned that they were afraid of being persuaded, or even forced, into having sex, as well as drinking and going to the movies, as we see in the following excerpt from an interview with teenage girls from Kisumu who state:

- Interviewer: But do you have special boyfriends?
 All: No!
 Anne: We are still underage.
 Makokha: Because we fear that they can spoil our future.
 Sophie: I think we are not ready to get into relationships, because right now I want to concentrate on my schoolwork.
 Nabii: Some of the boys . . . if you get one, they will kill you if you refuse their moves, so I will be in danger.
 Interviewer: What kind of danger?
 Nabii: They will want you to do things you are not expected to do, like having sex and sometimes you can catch AIDS.
 Natalie: You can end up taking alcohol and going to the movies.
 Interviewer: Is there anything wrong with going to the movies? (Some girls say 'Yes', some say 'No')
 Interviewer: What's bad about going to the movies?
 Makokha: If you are underage, you will not be concentrating on your schoolwork and you will be leading a bad life . . . and you will not respect your parents.
 Anne: Some of the movies lead you to have sex with your boyfriend. But . . . urr . . . could you imagine going without a boyfriend?
 Natalie: I don't like boys or girls who misbehave, cheat or lie, who bully other children, those who take drugs and go around having sex with anybody, doing all sorts of bad things, and those children who do not honor their parents.
 Caro: Ah, I dislike those girls involved in club patronizing.¹⁹²

Boasting about having multiple sexual relations was not something that was done by any of the girls interviewed. Indeed, it seemed that most of the girls were keen to present themselves as good, as opposed to sexual, by criticizing girls with boyfriends,

¹⁹²Excerpts from focus group discussions, St. Augustine High School, Kisumu, Kenya, June 2006

girls who had sex, and girls who went out – as we see in the following excerpt from an interview in Nakuru. They state:

- Jane: I go around with good girls because when I do something wrong they tell me that it is bad.
- Njeri: I get along only with good girls because they tell me about life, because they know that my parents are both dead so they tell me how to survive.
- Florence: I like going out with friends who have good behavior and whom I tell my secrets to and share ideas.
- Melissa: I go around with my friends who have good ideas and can give me good advice.
- Interviewer: What is it that you don't like about some friends?
- Njeri: Some friends will cause you to do something that is wrong, like going to bars or something that makes me uncomfortable.
- Florence: Some of the girls . . . if you join them, they start talking bout their boyfriends.
- Interviewer: Their boyfriends? What is it that you don't like about that?
- Atieno: They will influence me.
- Interviewer: Like how?
- Atieno: She wanted to influence me to be involved in those things, like having a boyfriend, going out, going to movies and clubbing.
- Andeso: I've got a friend who is now married, she still comes to school but now I refuse to play with her.¹⁹³

The absence of positive stories from girls about girls with boyfriends was striking. Most girls characterized these as inevitably oppressive relationships, which interfered with schoolwork, ended up in pregnancies and abuse, and conflicted with biblical or Islamic teachings. While boyfriend-girlfriend relations were very negative in the ways the girls described them, the researcher suggests that these girls must have had a powerful interest in presenting them. By doing so, they were showing themselves publicly, in the context of a group interview, to be good girls who resisted such relationships, contrasting themselves with bad girls who did not. Whereas boys could acquire status from their peers by speaking openly about their sex drive and by demeaning girls as objects for

¹⁹³Excerpts from focus group discussions, St. Augustine High School, Kisumu, Kenya, July 2006.

them, girls had to be careful not to talk about their sexual desires or about boyfriends for fear of being labeled as bad. As girls, but not boys are expected to be good, girls are less free to stay out and visit friends, or, go to the movies. Movies were associated by many young people in the study with sex and pornographic images, and were often presented as symbolizing bad, modern or western influences, which girls ought to resist. The embarrassed laughter, later in the interview, when one of the girls said she would like a good-looking boy as a future boyfriend, implied that desire was not something they should talk about, at least not with an adult present. The other girls had all said they wanted nice, understanding and church-going boyfriends. In characterizing teenage sexual relationships as abusive and exploitative, as many of the girls in the study did, they were not simply presenting themselves as good. The construction of sexually active girls as bad meant, as we saw in the interviews with sixteen year-old Kisumu teenagers, that boys could talk contemptuously about girls as usable objects with whom they had sex. Many girls in Kisumu, assumed that if they had sex with boys they would be treated in the same way. They were asked what they thought about girls of their age having sex and responded as follows:

- | | |
|----------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Jackie: | It is wrong because maybe your guy will give you a sexually transmitted disease or get you pregnant, and if he was interested in you he will not marry you. |
| Natalie: | I think it's bad because, if you have sex with someone, that someone will not love you and then you go out with someone else and have sex with him, at the end you will get AIDS and other STDs. |
| Sophie: | I think it's wrong because you are still too young to know anything about life, you won't have your 'O' level certificate let alone 'A' levels, so if you just get pregnant, you won't have any ambition in future. |
| Robbie: | All you should know is that the boy is just using you and, after you have sex, he will dump you. |

Sheila: I think if you sleep with one boy then he dumps you, the other boys would also want to use you because they think you are a bitch.¹⁹⁴

These girls spoke, as the boys had done about girls being transformed by sex into consumable objects, and becoming extremely vulnerable. Interestingly, some of the girls distinguished between love and sex, claiming they wanted boyfriends in the future who loved them rather than only desiring them sexually. Boys, too, wanted girlfriends who loved them, although this had a lot to do with their anxieties about being wanted only for their money.

Something interesting about the diaries kept by the girls, in contrast to their interviews, was how many wrote about their boyfriends and their enjoyment in having them. As one of the interviewers in Kisumu noted,

... some of the girls actually started their diaries by talking about their boyfriends. The girls seem to enjoy the fact that they are attractive to boys. For instance, several of the girls mention being proposed to by a number of boys over a short period. Apart from the girl who was proposed to by three boys in the space of only two days, another girl was also proposed to by two boys in just two days.

Whereas for the boys the diaries seemed to provide a safe space to be romantic, and to show how much they were affected by girls who dumped them, for the girls they seemed to provide an opportunity for articulating sexual desire. Indeed, the stereotype of boys as highly sexual and girls as non-sexual was clearly contradicted by the accounts of boyfriends and girlfriends that appeared in the diaries. Despite this, however, many of the young people believed in these stereotypes, which affected the ways they could act and the kind of relationships they could have. One notable example was asking out or proposing to someone of the opposite sex, which, as noted in the following excerpt, was

¹⁹⁴Excerpts from focus group discussions, St. Augustine High School, Kisumu, Kenya, June 2006.

extremely difficult, if not impossible, for many girls. The young girls in Nakuru, were asked if they could ask boys out for a date. What the researcher learnt from this excerpt is that, these girls are as sexually interested in boys as boys are in them, and that their failure to propose to boys does not mean that they have a lower sex drive than boys at all. They stated:

- Rose: When you are a girl, it's not easy. You could like a boy so much but you cannot propose. So if I were a boy, I could be able to tell the girl that I love her.
- Interviewer: So are you saying that there are no women who can propose to men?
- Andeso: Ah . . . there is none.
- Interviewer: Why?
- Atieno: It's embarrassing to ask a man out.
- Interviewer: What's embarrassing about it?
- Njeri: When I grew up, I was made to believe that a woman couldn't propose to a man. It's the man who is supposed to ask you out.
- Interviewer: So what do you do when there is a boy you like? How can you let him know that you want him?
- Nancy: You simply do a lot, make some moves, actions, or even dress attractively and let him notice you, and greet him so often, especially when wearing a miniskirt to attract him.
- Interviewer: When he proposes to you, how long then should he wait for the answer?
- Atieno: There and there. (Group laughter).¹⁹⁵

Almost all the girls who spoke said that dating was the boy's responsibility.

Some girls in Kisumu revealed that a few girls asked boys out and even asked boys to have sex with them. In most cases, this resulted in the girls being ridiculed as boys told other boys about the girls who had made moves on them. The majority of the young people interviewed said that boys were the ones who made the main decisions in boyfriend-girlfriend relationships because they believed in the stereotypes of boys as sexual, active leaders and girls as non-sexual, inactive and shy. Because of these

¹⁹⁵Excerpts from focus group discussions, Nakuru High School, Nakuru, Kenya, July 2006.

stereotypes, it was very difficult for girls to show their sexual feelings, and this helped to confirm the false view that, unlike boys, girls did not really have sexual feelings. While discussing who makes decisions in relationships, the boys and girls in Kisumu had the following to say:

- Francis: Boys should make decisions like where and when to have fun, like going for swimming and also when to have sex.
- Cliff: Boys should make decisions because girls are too shy to talk. I make decisions on when the girl should call or phone me.
- Sheila: I think boys should make decisions most of the time, but I can make decisions in rare cases. The boyfriend should make decisions concerning sexual matters, i. e. when to have sex, but I turn him down sometimes when I'm not feeling like having sex.¹⁹⁶

While boys may be expected to take the initiative and make the decisions in heterosexual relations, readers should not interpret this as showing a simple binary opposition between powerful males and powerless females. As argued earlier, in being expected to take the initiative and propose love, boys run the risk of rejection. As noted in the following excerpt from the diary of Gichinga, a teenage boy in Nakuru, when the girls are white and the boys are black, rejection may take a devastatingly racist form. He wrote:

I went to town with my friends. I enjoyed that day very much but there was one thing that broke my heart as we were strolling in town. We saw four white ladies. We stopped them and they shouted at us saying we must leave them alone. They called us *miros*. We went back very sad, we went back home . . . we went to check on our girls . . .¹⁹⁷

This excerpt vividly illustrates the importance of addressing how gender intersects with race as an aspect of identity, especially in the context of a black majority society

¹⁹⁶Excerpts from focus group discussions, Kisumu social hall, Kisumu, Kenya, June 2006.

¹⁹⁷Excerpt from Gichinga's written diary, Nakuru, Kenya, July 2006.

with a legacy of white political and economic domination.¹⁹⁸ This encounter demonstrates how the black boys (as powerful boys) stop the girls, and how the girls (as powerful whites) resist their advances by constructing them as an inferior race. Significantly, the boys did not retaliate or assert themselves in the face of such racism. They were clearly not in a position of power in relation to the girls; on the contrary, they became sad and deflated and went home. They then went to check on our girls – *our* - presumably, in this context, referring to black girls.

The evidence has shown how boys and girls construct and live out stereotypical gender identities in boyfriend-girlfriend relationships or through fantasies about ideal boyfriends and girlfriends. The evidence has also shown how some girls resist these stereotypes by rejecting the idea of boyfriends while they are at school. The familiar gendered dichotomies in the boys' and girls' accounts seemed to preclude the possibility of friendships between boys and girls, but were also constructed as making heterosexual relationships possible in that difference was constructed as sexually desirable.¹⁹⁹ Some feminist writers, notably Butler, have argued that it is by constructing themselves as heterosexual beings that people emphasize their gender differences, and that it is in those societies where sexual desire is presumed to be synonymous with heterosexual desire that gender identities tend to be most polarized.²⁰⁰ In those sites where the interviewers asked about same-sex sexual attraction, it was clear from the responses of shock and surprise that desire was always presumed to be heterosexual. In Kisumu, when asked whether

¹⁹⁸Robert Pattman, "Becoming White in Zimbabwe" *Autobiography*, Vol. VI, Nos. 1&2 (1998), 51-58.

¹⁹⁹Susan Frosh et al. *Young Masculinities: Understanding Boys in Contemporary Society* (London: Palgrave, 2002); J. Butler. *Gender Trouble* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990).

²⁰⁰J. Butler, *Gender Trouble* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990).

they knew of any instances of same-sex sexual relationships, all the boys and girls were adamant that they did not, with some constructing gayism as a foreign or an alien phenomenon. They stated:

- Jimmie: We only see it on TV.
 Val: I don't think there is gayism in Kenya. These things are for alien countries; they are sick down there.
 Edward: But I have seen it in Mombasa – a man was dressed like a woman, and the police came and picked him up.
 Interviewer: How about here in Kisumu?
 Francis: No. Here if a man is seen doing that, people will jump to conclusions and start calling you names, or stone you because they don't like it.²⁰¹

The surprise of hearing about an "incident of homosexuality" in Mombasa, which immediately followed the assertion that homosexuality was for alien countries, suggests that what this boy had in mind were not African but Western countries. It is hardly surprising that all the boys claimed to know of no instances of gay relationships, given the hostile reaction towards anyone who was seen to be gay. All the boys in all sites expressed fears about befriending other boys lest they be called gay or homosexual. It was an issue initially raised by the girls, probably because it was too contentious for the boys to be seen to be doing so. Boys also spoke in derogatory terms about mama's boys, from whom they differentiated themselves as tough, macho boys.²⁰² In Nakuru, it appeared that boys had to be careful not to be seen to exhibit what were constructed as feminine qualities, for fear of being accused of being homosexual. They were

²⁰¹Interviewed by author, Oral Interviews, St. Augustine High School, Kisumu, Kenya, June 2006.

²⁰²Robert Connell. *Gender and Power: Society, the Person and Sexual Politics* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1987); Susan Frosh et al. *Young Masculinities: Understanding Boys in Contemporary Society* (London: Palgrave, 2002); Nayak. A and Kehily, "Playing it Straight: Masculinities, Homophobias and Schooling" *Journal of Gender Studies* 5 (2): (1996), 211-230; Epstein, D. "Boyz Own Stories: Masculinities and Sexualities in Schools" In C. Griffen and S. Lees (eds) special issue 'Masculinities in Education' *Gender and Education*, 9 (1997), 105-114.

constructing themselves as tough in opposition to girls by policing their masculine identities, while expressing their fear through homophobia.

Boyfriend-girlfriend relationships were not usually relationships between equals. Both boys and girls expected future boyfriends to be workers and breadwinners, as well as making key decisions like proposing in a relationship, because boys were stereotyped as sexual and girls as non-sexual. Many boys and girls did not want boyfriends or girlfriends because they viewed the sexes as having little in common, and thought such relationships would interfere with their lives and schoolwork. Unlike boys, the girls were keen on showing they were good by not having boyfriends. Some boys, by contrast, boasted of having several girlfriends. While boyfriends were seen as powerful in the sense of being economic providers, sexual initiators and decision makers, these very identities were difficult for boys to live up to, and clearly generated personal anxiety. Boys were particularly anxious about being rejected by girls who were looking for more material comforts than they could provide.

The researcher argues that HIV/AIDS and life skills education should focus on the sorts of inequalities in boyfriend-girlfriend relationships that the young people in the study described. Educators need to encourage youth to start thinking about the possibility of more equal and mutual sexual relations, in which sexual desire is not seen as predominantly male and boys and men are not always expected to take the sexual and financial lead. It is important to encourage young people to reflect not only on the costs to girls of constructing boyfriends and girlfriends in these stereotypical ways, but also to boys. The costs to girls include a lack of decision-making power in these relationships, harassment by boys and older men, being unable to publicly express desire about boys,

and being subject to controls that do not apply to boys. The costs to boys include anxieties about girlfriends rejecting them for older, richer and more sexually experienced boys and men, and being unable to publicly express feelings of love and intimacy.

Boys and girls described people of the opposite sex in quite different, sometimes contradictory ways when being interviewed in groups and when writing their diaries. The researcher would argue that this is connected with the different ways that they present themselves in different contexts, and contend that HIV/AIDS and life skills educators should try to find ways of exploring and addressing these multiple identities.²⁰³ For this reason, it is advocated that various kinds of group discussions – both single- and mixed-sex – as well as diary keeping, as teaching methods and ways of generating resources for HIV/AIDS education. Using what people say in mixed classes as the only inputs for HIV/AIDS and life skills education risks reinforcing the impression that boys are naturally loud and sexual, while girls are naturally quiet and non-sexual.

Rather than allowing boys to assert themselves in relation to girls in class, criticizing them for doing so, HIV/AIDS and life skills educators could perhaps explore with them what would seem to be their contradictory views about girls in different social contexts. It is suggested that boys often perform very differently when they are with other boys (and girls) than when they are on their own (i.e. writing a diary) or alone with an adult. A continuing challenge for HIV/AIDS and life skills educators will be to encourage boys to perform in groups in ways that do not involve subordinating girls, but draw on the affection for girls that they express so vividly in more private contexts. On the contrary, one of the aims of HIV/AIDS and life skills education should be to raise

²⁰³ S. Hall. "The Question of Cultural Identity" In S. Hall, D. Held and T. McGrew *Modernity and Its Futures* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992).

possibilities of boys and girls relating to each other not as stereotypical opposites, but as potential equals and friends.

Age, Sex and Gender

As observed, boys are usually seen as the initiators of sex, as well as buyers of sex in instances in which they provide girls with gifts or money. While this means that boys can be seen as having sexual and economic power over girls, it also means that boys face the chance of being rejected by girls of their own age who seek out older richer boys and men who are better able to buy them gifts. It was a major concern for the boys in the study, an issue that came about because of the way that boys and men were stereotyped as having more money and power than girls. The researcher will focus on age-gender hierarchies and the so-called sugar daddy phenomenon. Boys and girls in all the study sites spoke about sugar daddies, or older richer men with whom girls have sexual relations. The researcher examined what the interviewees said about relations between girls and sugar daddies, how they explained them, and what they thought about them.

Age-Gender Hierarchies

The following excerpt is from an interview with sixteen to seventeen year-old boys in Busia, on the issue of teenage boys engaging in sexual intercourse with relatively younger girls. They stated:

- | | |
|----------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Haji: | Boys of our age have sex with girls our age, but girls sometimes have sex with men who are older. |
| Kennedy: | Sometimes they go out with men twice their age. |
| Chanzu: | For boys our age, it is difficult to have sexual intercourse with girls our age because in junior school, you go for senior secondary or first year university. Girls our age have relationships with seniors because you have to be high, well knowing, so girls go for these because they see you as immature, and that you wouldn't know some things. |

- Haji: That is why boys after school remove their ties, because they know that no girl will go for them when they recognize them.
- Peter: Even here in school, like us Form Three's, it's easier to get girls in lower classes because they think we know everything, it's easier proposing to a Form One, and she is likely – 90 percent she will say 'yes' – because she will be afraid or because she thinks I am hard.²⁰⁴

Many people interviewed were opposed to sugar daddy relations and blamed both sugar daddies and girls for it. The boys were particularly angry, blaming girls for going after older richer men and for being materialistic and loose. However, while the boys blamed girls for chasing sugar daddies, they were themselves developing sexual relations with younger girls, and, as seen in the above excerpt, presenting themselves as knowledgeable, sexually mature, powerful and tough. Although these boys were trying live to up to the stereotype of the powerful boyfriend, this meant that girls of their age tended to reject them, turning to boys and men who were more mature and economically and sexually powerful. In order to attract girls of their own age, the boys took off their school ties outside school in order not to be recognized and also, presumably, to be seen as more mature than they actually were. In Kisumu, boys' concerns about being rejected by girls for older richer men surfaced in a mixed group interview. The girls suggested that girls prefer older men because the penises of boys of their age were too small. This implication that their age mates were not sufficiently developed provoked considerable anxiety among the boys, who replied that they bruised their penises on young girls' vaginas because the latter were so much smaller than their penises. The girls only deserted them for old men because the latter were richer, the boys said. This seemed a much safer reason for them, as it did not question their own heterosexual prowess, which

²⁰⁴Interviewed by author, Oral interviews, Esifugwe School, Busia, Kenya, May 2006

was more fundamental to their sense of being powerful men than their economic power. The girls had the following to say:

- Nandwa: Girls go to have sex with old men because young boys have got small penises.
- Natalie: Some girls go to old men because they want to enlarge their vagina.
- Sheila: Some girls hate young boys because their penises are small. That's where you find a situation whereby you are busy thrusting up and down, even sweating on top, while she is busy plaiting her hair and chatting you up.
- Louis: Even young girls have small vaginas, so when you force yourself you end up having bruises on your penis.
- Edward: Girls prefer old men because, they say, they have the 4Cs – Cell phone, Car, Cash and four Cornered shoes. With these they know that they have all the necessities . . . when you are stranded on the way, you can just call him on his cell because he is always with it. Then he can come and pick you up with his car, and buy you lunch since he has got cash. And when he comes out of the car, the first thing you will see are his four cornered shoes²⁰⁵

Interestingly, Sheila uses the third person pronoun to refer to the nonchalant girl having sex with the boy of her age, who she refers to as “you . . . sweating on top.” Presumably, it was too embarrassing and provocative for her to consider saying “I”. Louis and Edward spoke with a lot of emotion as they responded to what they clearly construed as a slight on their masculinity. Many boys told stories about girls eventually being rejected by their sugar daddies after becoming pregnant and/or contracting HIV/AIDS. Significantly, even though these boys despised sugar daddy figures, it was the girls who were blamed for seducing them in order to gain material things, and they were also blamed as the spreaders of HIV/AIDS. In a mixed-sex group interview in Nakuru, pictures were shown of a schoolgirl being stopped in the street by an elderly man

²⁰⁵Interviewed by author, Oral interviews, St. Augustine High School, Kisumu, Kenya, June 2006.

and the girl was blamed, not only by boys but girls as well, for wearing a short skirt.

The view was that she did this purposely to seduce the man so that he would give her money.

Laughing at Sugar Mummies but Not Sugar Daddies

Unlike sugar daddy relationships that were considered shameful, relationships between boys and older women or sugar mummies, were viewed as amusing, as can be noted in the following excerpt from a mixed interview with sixteen to eighteen year-olds in Nakuru. The boys stated:

- Wekesa: In most times, boys don't even agree – they just find themselves there whereby they can't even escape. You can't even . . . you've nothing to do
- Interviewer: It's like you find yourself in prison?
- Sunny: Yah, more like you are in prison
- Interviewer: How?
- Warui: How? Maybe you, somebody calls you (to come to her house). At the house, she manipulates you. You see what I mean? She calls you maybe in her bedroom to come, and maybe just come and kill this lizard for me (lots of laughter) . . . and you go there.
- Interviewer: You don't find a lizard?
- Chege: You go there . . . just to find a big lizard naked. (Hoots of laughter)
- Interviewer: You don't run away?
- Wekesa: By the time you start thinking of running away, the door is closed.
- Warui: You can't reject . . . you can't reject these things. Once you see that thing is arose, then there is no turning back.
- Sunny: In such cases, if you are a principled person, then you cannot do that. (Laughter)
- Warui: You tend to lose principles
- Sunny: It is difficult. It is difficult. So the best way is not to go there . . . not to go there!²⁰⁶

Whereas discussions about sugar daddy relations, especially in mixed groups, were serious and sometimes provoked heated exchanges, the lizard lady here was treated as a joke figure. Chege spoke, as if from personal experience, about being with a big

²⁰⁶ Interviewed by author, Oral interviews, Nakuru High School, Nakuru, Kenya, July 2006.

lizard naked. It was described in graphic detail and was a source of much amusement for both the boys and girls in the interview. It was funny because it so clearly violated the popular assumption that only males initiate sexual relations, but rather than presenting her in the story as a human being initiating a sexual encounter, she is constructed as a lizard and becomes a figure of ridicule as the boys elaborate on how she ensnares and manipulates them and prevents their means of escape. Partly this is funny and not serious, because the subtext is that, as boys with huge sex drives, they are not being forced into the situation at all.

Defending Sexual Relations Between Girls and Older Men

As discussed earlier, girls were viewed as bad, by both boys and girls, for wanting to have boyfriends for their money and not because they loved them. Many of the girls interviewed characterized their contemporaries with boyfriends as such. In the mixed interview in Nakuru, some girls continued to criticize other girls for not showing authentic love, suggesting they went out with older and more powerful men so they could show off to their friends. Girls' identities were shown here to be dependent to some extent upon the status of their boyfriends or lack of them. The girls had the following to say:

Nabii: I think that some girls just go to older persons just to show off to their friends that they don't go out with school-going guys, but they go out with older persons.

Interviewer: Yes?

Nandwa: Sometimes it's because of peer pressure, when you are with your friends they like boasting that 'I am going out with a guy who gives me anything that I ask for', and you might think that you are doing nothing when you are going out with a schoolboy so you also do what your friends tell you. They boast that 'I have this, my boyfriend bought it for me – I don't go out with school guys, I go out with working class'.

One confident and assertive girl, Sophie, dissented from the general critique of materialistic girls, arguing that there was nothing wrong with younger girls having a relationship with older men, as they could also be in love. The implication was that their relationship might not be materialistic, but that the girl might love the older richer man simply for who he was, and vice versa. An emotionally charged dialogue ensued between Sophie and the other girls:

- Sophie: Can't you go for an older person just because you love him the way he is, if he is older than you . . . maybe 13 years older...
- Caro: When you go for an older man than you, that man is going to demand for things that you are not ready to do . . . he is going to think that you are big enough to think the way he thinks.
- Robbie: Yes, not only that – don't you think that person is only going to abuse you by using you and leaving you?
- Sophie: No, because why I am saying this is because you are saying you involve yourself in a relationship with that guy just because you love him the way he is . . .
- Jackie: Why are you going for an older man when there are these guys around here? (Gesturing around her)
- Sophie: Just because you love him the way he is. (Widespread commotion and laughter)
- Caro: He is not going to ask you out because he loves you. He's going to ask you because he wants to use you.²⁰⁷

Defending boyfriend-girlfriend relationships between girls and older men was an unusual and difficult position for a girl to take, especially in a mixed gender interview. Significantly, Sophie justified relationships between girls and older men by arguing that they could be based on love and not on the material benefits girls could accrue from them. In other words, she too expressed a commitment to romantic love, and, in this sense, was presenting herself as good. Throughout the interview, Sophie was very keen to assert girls' rights. It may have been that she was condoning relationships with older

²⁰⁷ Excerpt from focus group discussion, St. Augustine High School, Kisumu, Kenya, June 2006.

men because she was critical of the suggestion that contemporary girls were to blame for going after older richer men. In this interview, as in almost every other that broached the subject of sugar daddies, it was girls who were being blamed for pursuing older richer males, not the men for attracting the girls. The sugar daddy phenomenon exists precisely because boyfriends are popularly constructed as sexually and economically powerful and as providers for girls. Sophie did not challenge the idea of boys as providers, but asserted girls' rights to enter into relationships with older men in the face of popular views that characterize girls as prostitutes for seeking out such relationships. The effect of such views is to control and regulate the behavior of *all* girls, making it difficult or impossible for them to move freely in the evening, to wear certain clothes or to speak about sex and sexuality, for fear of being seen as bad. Sophie, the researcher would suggest, was expressing her opposition to these ways in which girls are commonly constrained.

The behavior of all girls is controlled and their freedoms curtailed by the threat of being labeled as bad girls trying to attract sugar daddies. This is not to suggest that many girls are not attracted to males who are older and richer than them, and are not exploited in these relationships. In sugar daddy relationships, young girls are more vulnerable to being dumped and rejected by sugar daddies who have wives. These girls are also particularly vulnerable to HIV/AIDS, as such men are likely to be more sexually experienced and thus perhaps more likely than most people their age to carry the virus. According to all teenage girls interviewed, sugar daddies are attracted to them specifically because they think younger girls are less likely to carry the HIV virus. The young people spoke about poverty influencing girls to have sex with older men. One Busia girl, Fatuma also linked this to the spread of HIV/AIDS, "I think poverty is the

main cause for AIDS, because we see schoolgirls . . . when they see others buying lunch, because they are poor and cannot afford lunch they will certainly go to sugar daddies so that they can get the money to buy all they want, because their parents cannot afford to give them everything they want.”²⁰⁸ Sex for economic survival, commonly referred to as *mlo kwa kazi* or loosely translated *food for work* by the Kisumu girls, was said to be pervasive through out the country. As well as providing food (or the money to buy food), older men are said to pay for school fees, candy, cell phones and clothes in return for sex. The following excerpt statements show how vulnerable girls are in such relationships:

Interviewer: And this food for work is with who? Are they using condoms or what?

Nandwa: With Kombi drivers, businessmen. Condoms . . . ah, no, they are not.

Sheila: Some of them use condoms but some do not.

Jackie: (Whispering) They get pregnant²⁰⁹

In Busia, lack of reliable transport to and from school was also reported to put many girls at risk, with some engaging in sexual relationships with bus conductors in return for free transport.²¹⁰

As demonstrated, the construction of boys as powerful, as initiators and economic providers in sexual relationships, generates the sugar daddy phenomenon for which girls themselves are often blamed. It is important that boys and girls are discouraged from

²⁰⁸Interviewed by author, Oral Interview, Esifugwe School, Busia, Kenya, May 2006.

²⁰⁹Interviewed by author, Oral Interviews, St. Augustine High School, Kisumu, Kenya, June 2006.

²¹⁰Wamahi, S. P. and Chege, F. *Empowering Strategy for Dealing with Sexual Harassment and Abuse: A Case Study from Kenya*. Prepared for the African Conference on the Empowerment of Women through Functional Literacy and the Education of the Girl-Child, September 8-13, Kampala, Uganda, (1996).

having sexual relationships with partners who are much older or younger than them – and, instead, to establish equal relationships as boyfriends and girlfriends. Young people need to be encouraged to contemplate the possibilities of boyfriend-girlfriend relationships in which boys are not expected to provide economically and to take the sexual initiative.

Gender Violence

It has been pointed out that forms of sexual harassment were reported by the young people in the study as constituting major problems for girls. By sexual harassment the researcher means repeated and unwanted verbal and physical sexual advances that were embarrassing or humiliating. In the examples reported, boys and men were overwhelmingly the perpetrators of incidences of harassment, asserting themselves as powerful figures over girls as the victims. The researcher noted how boys made dirty jokes when girls contributed or made mistakes in class, and how this resulted in girls being marginalized. It is important to note that the interviewers did not ask young people directly if they were sexually harassed. Rather, when they addressed this, it was in the context of how young people related to their parents, teachers or classmates, or what they liked or disliked about being boys and girls. In this sense, sexual harassment emerged spontaneously as an issue of pressing concern for many of the girls. The examples given were mainly of sexual harassment at school, either from teachers or fellow classmates. A few girls also mentioned being touched by conductors or *matatu touts* when taking public transportation, or being offered free rides by Kombi drivers in exchange for sex. Some girls in Kisumu also spoke about sexual harassment in the home. It was striking how many girls (and a few boys) were keen to talk about their experiences of sexual

harassment to the interviewers, which they said they had been unable to divulge to their teachers or other adults. This implies that the interviewers were developing the sorts of friendly, young person centered relations with these young people that enabled them to talk openly about their concerns.

In interviews with teenage girls in Kisumu, some accused close relatives – stepfathers, uncles, and even fathers – of sexually harassing girls. However, they tended to blame these men in general, without implicating their own stepfathers, fathers or uncles. For example, Sheila said “step fathers are not to be trusted,” and although no one actually admitted to being sexually abused themselves, some of their accounts suggested that they might have been. Some girls, when talking about girls in these relationships spoke in the more personal second-person tense, as opposed to the less personal third-person. They stated:

Anne: I fear being raped, because one can be raped anytime and anywhere. Uncles are very bad; they can rape you if your parents are not there. They ask you to give them a glass of water, follow you from the back, hold you and rape you.

Caro: Fathers should not take daughters as their wives, they should behave as fathers . . . When left home alone they tell you, ‘do you know my daughter, I love you . . .’ Fathers have sex with their daughters, and tell them not to tell anybody.²¹¹

Fathers, it appears, can be powerful sugar daddy figures, a position no doubt reinforced by girls’ economic dependence on them, and also by their identities as relatively subordinate members of the family.

Girls in all the sites spoke about being sexually harassed not only by boys at school but also by teachers – some of whom were constructed as sugar daddy figures, offering various inducements accruing from their power as teachers in exchange for sex.

²¹¹Interviewed by author, Oral Interviews, St. Augustine High School, Kisumu, Kenya, June 2006.

Many young people, provided specific examples of teachers in their school trying to court sexual favors with girls or putting girls down by referring to their sexuality.

Whether many male teachers actually had sexual relationships with female students, it was certainly the impression of both boys and girls that this was a common occurrence.

In Kisumu, several schoolgirls complained about male teachers sexualizing them, making comments such as “the girl is cool” and “you have been tasted”, and addressing them as “ma girls” (my girls). Some of the girls complained that if they arrived late at school – as many did because of their domestic chores – the teachers were not only unsympathetic but often exploited the situation by insulting them in front of the class. During one such confrontation, a girl recalled a teacher calling her a crook and interspersing his insults with the following ill-disguised sexual connotations, stating:

Do you have children at home that you were washing napkins for? Or where did you pass? *Umetoka disco? Umetoka kuonjwa-onjwa?* (Have you come from a disco?) *Umetoka kuonjwa-onjwa?* (Have you come from being tasted, .i.e. sexually?)²¹²

The girls accused one male teacher of asking them to parade back and forth in front of the class, while examining them from head to toe and looking into their eyes. They said that, based on this parading exercise, the teacher would proceed to award high grades to the girls that he liked. Although the girls protested about sexual harassment by teachers, they seemed aware of their lack of power in these circumstances. Some of them observed that, if a girl dared to retort, the teacher would refuse to grade her book and she would be the loser, both in the academic and social sense.²¹³ How sexual relations were

²¹²Interviewed by author, Oral Interview, St. Augustine High School, Kisumu, Kenya, June 2006.

established and sustained through male teachers' ability to fail the girls they desired, or alternatively to provide them with exam leaks, was raised as an issue by young people in all the study sites.

Some of the boys interviewed in Nakuru, alleged that during the lunch break, male teachers often sent girls to buy them lunch at nearby shops and then followed and sexually harassed them. One boy claimed that, although some male teachers accused the girls of being lazy, the same teachers were observed sending them on unofficial errands. When interviewed, a male teacher claimed that they preferred sending girls to buy them snacks or lunch as girls were cleaner and less clumsy than boys. Ironically, the boys viewed this sexualization of girls by male teachers as unfair favoritism. Although they acknowledged that some girls feared and hated male teachers and the subjects they taught, and were afraid to ask them questions, they still thought the girls were receiving special treatment – which they described as kindness – and felt unfairly discriminated against.²¹⁴ Clearly, the girls and boys interpreted the classroom culture differently and in gendered ways, with boys portraying their female classmates as domestic and sexual servants of the teachers. Some boys appeared to rejoice over the girls' psychological and physical suffering – perhaps because they did not have access to those girls sexually, and were thus jealous of their teachers and hateful of the girls for stealing the limelight in class. The girls, however, constructed their male teachers as social and sexual antagonists, with whom they had to coexist for the sake of securing an education. While

²¹³Chege, F. and Mati, F. "Researching Sexual Harassment In Educational Institutions: A Case Study of Weupe Primary School, Kenya", *Report presented at a cross-country workshop on Methodologies for Studying Sexual Harassment in Educational Institutions* (Entebbe, Uganda, 1998).

²¹⁴Mathangani, P. Sexual Abuse Rife in Schools. In *The Daily Nation* newspaper, Nairobi: Monday, April 9th, 2001.

highly critical of relations between male teachers and girls, some boys in Busia asserted that because they were men, they understood what the male teachers were going through. They were identifying, as fellow males, as people with huge sex drives, and this partly legitimized, in their minds, teachers' sexual advances to female students.

In all the study sites, girls complained about boys fondling them against their will, and sometimes peeping at or touching their private parts. Few, however, reported such incidences to their teachers, partly because they feared being beaten by boys, but also because they knew they would not be taken seriously – and might even be rebuked – if they made such reports. The following is an excerpt from an interview with a group of girls aged sixteen and above in Busia who had the following to say:

Fatuma: Yesterday something happened. There was this girl in class whom some boys were touching and she kept on hitting them with books and telling them to stop; and then all of a sudden she started crying as if something, part of her, had been taken away.

Interviewer: Do they report it to anybody?

Tukio: Some teachers don't take it serious. Teachers think we encourage it, we send a signal

Tila: At one time some people in my class were harassing me, though not sexually, and I reported it to my Guidance and Counseling teacher, and she told me that I thought too much of myself, and it never stopped.

Tukio: At one time a boy kissed me on the cheek and I didn't like it, it felt so wrong and painful, and I thought of reporting it but I felt teachers will think that I was joking or I wanted it to happen.²¹⁵

Because girls are not supposed to express sexual desire in the same way that boys do, this leaves them open to accusations that they may have encouraged or sent a signal to boys who harass them. It is not just that they might be disbelieved that may make them reluctant to report such incidences, but that they may be seen as bad girls for

²¹⁵Interviewed by author, Oral Interviews, Esifugwe School, Busia, Kenya, May 2006.

speaking openly about sex in this way. In the same interview, some of the girls claimed that some girls actually enjoyed sexual harassment or being touched by boys, stating:

- Fatuma: I have witnessed a case where a boy was touching a girl's breast, but the girl seemed to like it.
 Tukio: I think the girl doesn't want it – it's only that there is nothing she can do.
 Maryam: I think the girls like sexual harassment; some take it as play, which I find wrong. Maybe it's because of their hormonal change in puberty, and they want to please men.
 Tila: They don't fight it off.
 Interviewer: Do girls ever touch boys?
 Tukio: Yes, and by doing so they encourage the boys to touch them in turn.²¹⁶

Significantly, these girls all used the third person when referring to girls who encouraged harassment, and referred to themselves only when they were complaining about being harassed. They were constructing these girls as bad for being overly sexual, for enjoying being touched by boys – and were implicitly presenting themselves, by contrast, as good. The other girls were regarded as siren figures wanting to please men, attracting sexually active males and enjoying being the objects of their affections. While such girls may touch boys, this was only significant in so far as it encouraged boys – who were being constructed here as the really sexually active ones – to touch them. While criticizing sexual harassment, these girls were doing so, like many young people in the study, in a way that reproduced stereotypes of boys as sexual predators and girls as either good and non-sexual or bad and sex objects. Any kind of sexual relationship between boys and girls was seen as boys sexually harassing girls, and girls who wanted sexual relations with boys were blamed for inviting such harassment.

²¹⁶Interviewed by author, Oral Interviews, Esifugwe School, Busia, Kenya, May 2006.

So strong was the stereotype of boys and men as sexual predators with a huge sex drive, and girls as objects that aroused this drive, that girls were sometimes blamed for dressing or behaving in ways that provoked male desire to such an extent that it caused boys to rape them. As is noted in the following excerpt from a mixed group interview with teenagers in Busia, girls as well as boys blamed girls for being raped, stating:

- Interviewer: OK, are there any other groups (who help to spread HIV/AIDS)?
 Chichi: Yes, girls who dress in sexy clothes.
 Getty: I wanted to say something about miniskirts . . . you know when I put on a miniskirt that leaves all this out (referring to her lower body), you will see this division – the other part is dark and the other light . . .
 Musa: You get there and bend down and ‘Africa is exposed’. (Group laughter)
 Tukio: When I put on a miniskirt, I will attract all boys – maybe the boy won’t approach me formally, but will just rape me. If he had AIDS, in that way, the virus is spread.
 Interviewer: But that’s rape?
 Tukio: Yes, but the way I dressed would have caused the man to rape me.
 Peter: Even without that. When I see ‘Africa exposed’, I will feel stimulated, I will come and talk to you.
 Interviewer: What is this ‘Africa’?
 Peter: Urr . . . ‘Africa’ is a *madiaba* (the female behind).
 Zainab: Urr . . . say what you want to say.
 Peter: Well, what I am saying is, when you bend down, because you’re putting on a mini, your private parts will be exposed and on seeing that I will be stimulated – my engine then boils and I will approach you and talk to you nicely. We then go into a corner then we hit it – we have sex, without protection.²¹⁷

Peter is speaking here in an almost comical way about rape, using euphemisms such as “Africa exposed” and “my engine boils”, which elicit much laughter from the group. By doing so, not only is he deflecting from the seriousness of rape, he is also minimizing responsibility for his own actions. It is his boiling engine that is to blame –

²¹⁷Interviewed by author, Oral Interviews, Esifugwe School, Busia, Kenya, May 2006.

as if this is a part of him over which he has no control, which is inevitably and mechanically triggered by the stimulus presented by the girl bending down.

While most boys said they enjoyed being touched by girls, others like, Fred, sixteen year-old boy from Kisumu who is quoted below, did not. This boy also said he felt too embarrassed to report such an incident, but not because he would be seen as bad and promiscuous like the girls. Rather, the researcher would suggest, it was because of the assumption that, as a macho young man with a powerful heterosexual drive, he would be laughed at and ridiculed for presenting himself as the victim of sexual harassment.

Fred stated:

Some girls demand to touch us. For example, at one time a girl came to me and told me that she wanted to touch me there (pointing at his private parts). I just left her, but I felt disturbed the whole day; I didn't tell anyone. However, for boys to do this they think about it before because girls will report it but boys won't.²¹⁸

In a mixed group discussion among sixteen to eighteen year-olds in Nakuru, boys denied touching girls and girls denied touching boys. However, the boys challenged the girls on this, giving rise to much hilarity among the boys. Like the lizard lady, the idea of girls fondling boys was comical for them, subverting, as it did, assumptions of girls as the objects of a heterosexual drive. For the girls, however, it was less funny – as, presumably, they sought to distance themselves from such a figure. They reacted as follows stating:

Interviewer:	Do you touch girls? (Addressing the boys)
All boys:	No!
Interviewer:	Do you touch boys? (Addressing the girls)
All boys:	Yes!
All girls:	No!
Wekesa:	In their private parts.

²¹⁸Interviewed by author, Oral Interviews, St. Augustine High School, Kisumu, Kenya, June 2006.

Florence: No, how comes it's only the boys who are saying Yes?
(Laughter from the boys).²¹⁹

Some schoolgirls in their mid-teens in Busia, reported having a particularly good relationship with one of the only three female teachers in their school, because she was seen as supporting them by encouraging them to do well in their schoolwork. This was in stark contrast to the male teachers, some of whom, as indicated, were said to make sexist remarks about girls for even being at school, and were criticized for sexually harassing them. The female teacher urged the girls to avoid playing with boys – and risk contracting HIV/AIDS. Indeed, this seemed to be linked with encouraging them to do well, as seen in the following interview with fourteen year-old girls:

Interviewer: What can you say about the relationship between girls and the female teacher?
Dina: She talks to us.
Interviewer: What does she say?
Nabwire: Be good girls. Be good girls. Do not let us down. Don't play with boys or you may get AIDS . . .²²⁰

To some extent, the girls, perceived the female teacher as a source of guidance and sought information from her. They seemed to have confidence in her to take care of their needs. They also sought refuge in her house at times when they felt harassed by boys. Some of the girls even saw her as a mother figure, as sixteen year-old Tila, described, "She is like our mother. She tells us everything, to be clean every day. She checks our hair . . ." Tila expressed disgust at the way that boys talked about the female teacher, "Boys backbite her when she is out. They say . . . she looks like she is as tall as a giraffe. They like short women . . . I feel angry because they are abusing our madam. I

²¹⁹ Interviewed by author, Oral Interviews, Nakuru High School, Nakuru, Kenya, July 2006.

²²⁰ Interviewed by author, Oral Interviews, Esifugwe School, Busia, Kenya, May 2006.

tell them that it is bad.”²²¹ Here the girls are strongly identifying with of the few female teachers in the school. It would seem that this, to a large extent, relies on opposition to boys; the teacher tells them not to play with boys, they seek refuge in her house, they are angry with boys who backbite her. She seems like a mother figure, helping and advising the girls, but in a way that – like the advice of many mothers in the other study sites – reaffirms boys as the enemy. She is not facilitating communication and interaction between boys and girls; rather, she is protecting the girls from boys who are being constructed as generally bad. Whether this is empowering or not for girls is highly debatable.

There was little indication from the study that girls and boys were aware of their rights as children, nor was there any suggestion that the schools had functional mechanisms through which girls could channel their grievances. The common stories of sexual harassment perpetrated against girls by male teachers implied that figures of authority in schools did not just turn a blind eye to sexual harassment, but were actually implicated in it. Sexual harassment is a topic that must be addressed by school authorities in Kenya as well as in HIV/AIDS and life skills education, precisely because it is such an important issue for girls and boys. While sexual harassment must not be tolerated in schools, it is important that schools’ responses to it do not simply involve punishing boys, and potentially making them more hostile to girls. A different strategy would be to focus on the benefits for both boys and girls of developing more equal relationships between them. It is important not to assume that sexual desire is mainly male and that heterosexual relations invariably involve males harassing females. Indeed,

²²¹Ibid.

in order to establish more equal sexual relations between males and females, one of the aims of HIV/AIDS and life skills education should be to encourage girls to be able to express more openly their sexual desires. This would make them less vulnerable to forms of sexual abuse.

In HIV/AIDS and life skills education, boys and girls should be able to explore what sexual harassment is, why it takes place, whether boys and girls have similar desires, why girls get blamed, and so on. The aim of such education should be to empower and enable boys and girls to negotiate sexual relations with each other – whether this means resisting, delaying or entering into such relations, and whether these should involve kissing, cuddling, being close or having penetrative sex. It must not reinforce the stereotype of girls as weak, fragile and passive, by presenting them as in need of protection from active, strong and sexually predatory boys and teachers.

Although male teachers are sometimes accused of harassment themselves, it is important that they do not feel debarred from becoming HIV/AIDS or life skills educators because of the fear of not being taken seriously. Men teaching life skills education can act as important role models for boys and demonstrate to both boys and girls that it is possible for males to be responsible, caring, sensitive and approachable. In order to do this successfully, male teachers must be as outspoken as their female colleagues in their opposition to forms of sexual harassment. Likewise, they must not be authoritarian and judgmental in their approach to teaching about sexuality, but must adopt the kind of holistic, student centered approach that the study took.

Many of the young people in the study reported encountering acts of violence or physical assault on a regular basis. Such violence featured prominently in the diaries

kept by both boys and girls – with the writers featuring as victims, perpetrators or witnesses – suggesting that violence is part of these young people's everyday lives. The acts of violence were perpetrated either by boys against girls or boys against boys; sometimes, although less frequently, they were committed by adults against young people. Acts of violence by girls were almost non-existent. These different forms of violence were examined in an attempt to discover what kinds of identities and relations its perpetrators were trying to establish. On adults perpetrating violence, the focus was mainly on teachers and the use of corporal punishment, as this was by far the most common form of adult violence reported by the interviewees. Several examples of violence were presented in the diaries are summed below:

- Sophie: At her party, some boy hit me and made a pass, it was the last person I would have suspected as I have never spoken to him let alone seen him speaking to any woman.
- Nabii: The guy did not even ask questions, just slapped the girl. My brother arrived and hit this guy, that made me feel better.
- Fred: As I was walking, I saw a boy hitting a girl – then I went there to solve the problem.
- Nandwa: I met a rude boy in an off license store who swore at me when I refused his proposal; I just prayed God would help him.
- Natalie: A boy called Bruce on the bus promised to beat me up. I said he will beat me if I am his child. He swore at me, I just kept quiet and asked if he is finished.²²²

Violence, or the threat of violence, was sometimes used by boys to keep girls in check, for example, if girls refused their proposals or, if they challenged boys. Through the threat of violence, Bruce, in the last excerpt above, infantilised the girl, and her refusal to be treated in this way made him swear at her. It would appear that some girls rely upon their brothers and other boys for protection from boys. Some of the girls

²²²Excerpts from written diaries, St. Augustine High School, Kisumu, Kenya, May 2006.

regarded boys who would protect them as their ideal boyfriends – by which they meant boys who would ward off sexual approaches from other boys. This desire for protection, provided either by boyfriends or supportive networks with other girls, suggests that sexual harassment and abuse are a major problem in the lives of these girls. As feminist writers such as Griffin have argued, fear of abuse from men often reinforces girls' and women's dependence upon one boy or man to protect them.²²³ Not only does this restrict girls' movements; it also gives particular men and boyfriends enormous power over them.

The boys in the interviews appeared to attach great importance to fighting prowess, which they believed made them superior to girls as well as heterosexually attractive. In Nakuru, boys reported that they fought among themselves over girls to show their strength, and also that they liked fighting in order to be recognized by girls.

Boys, especially those from the urban settings in Kisumu and Nakuru, where gangsters are common, wrote a great deal about getting into fights with other boys. They stated:

- | | |
|---------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Chima: | I argued with someone over a pen of mine that had been stolen from my bag. When I confronted them, they started crying. I had hit them after warning them that they would cause me to hit them over something unimportant like a pen. |
| Cliff: | We argue constantly and I hit him because he thinks he is clever. |
| Henry: | I told him I would kick him and he replied 'kick me', so I did and we started fighting. |
| Jimmie: | Later that day they threatened to kill me if they were expelled from school. |
| Val: | A guy who used to beat me up – my uncle went to beat him, ending up by breaking his spinal cord. My uncle was arrested for assault. |

²²³S. Griffin. *Rape: The Politics of Consciousness* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1986).

Edward: When I came from school that boy beat me, he said I talk a lot and he beat me terribly.²²⁴

Fighting appears to be a common way in which boys not only construct themselves as different from girls, but create hierarchies and assert themselves in relation to other boys. Some of the above examples read like tests of manhood, with boys competing against each other, trading insults, threats and fighting. So tied up is fighting with the ways in which boys construct their identities that in a number of interviewees, young people as well as teachers, suggested that fighting was healthy and normal for boys. Sixteen year-old Mbui in Nakuru said that boys related well together, indicating that they work together, sit together, eat together, and fight. Rather than being seen as dividing boys, fighting here was regarded as something that helped to bond them and contributed to their sense of being males together. Boys engage in fighting and other acts of violence as they seek to live up to the stereotype of males as big and strong. By doing this, they are showing how strong they are compared to other boys and, as aggressors as well as potential protectors, compared to girls. Needless to add, it means that many boys, as well as girls, are hurt, bullied, and made afraid in the process.

Some of the young people in group as well as individual interviews spoke openly about being abused in their families – notably by their stepfathers, but it was teachers and their disciplining of students that featured most often as acts of violence perpetrated by adults against children. Relationships with teachers were often described as authoritarian, with some teachers beating a whole class for making noise and singling out students and calling them derogatory names. In the diaries, especially those of boys, a great deal was written about being punished and insulted by teachers. The following

²²⁴Excerpts from written diaries, St. Augustine High School, Kisumu, Kenya, May 2006.

excerpts were taken from the diaries of teenage boys at all the three study sites and they stated:

- Steven: Teacher gave lashes out at school, one student even received three stripes.
 Ouma: The teacher beat all of us because we did not know the answers to the questions.
 Musa: I took out my books and had hardly started reading when our teacher returned and gave all of us a good hiding because he said we made noise. I was sad.
 Kennedy: The fourth teacher came and found us making noise. The teacher then punished us all and my hand was swollen.
 Jimmie: I was made to stand still on a hot day till after school.²²⁵

In spite of the illegality of corporal punishment in schools in Kenya, it appears that such punishment is still commonly administered – as reflected in the significance attached to it in these students' diaries.²²⁶ One girl, Zainab, even expressed happiness at passing a day without witnessing a beating – “Today we enjoyed lessons because no one was beaten” - as if this was an unusual occurrence. Some abuse by teachers was not only physical but psychological, as the following excerpts convey:

- Steven: Teacher told me I am a fool.
 Konje: Teacher tried to make the boy sing in class.
 Khalid: Teacher told me I am stupid – I should be a foreman at the sugar farms.²²⁷

In all the three study sites visited by the interviewers, students mentioned that boys and girls were subject to corporal punishment – and that it was administered more frequently and more harshly to boys. Boys were often caned on their buttocks, while

²²⁵Excerpts from written diaries, St. Augustine High School, Kisumu, Esifugwe School, Busia and Nakuru High School, Nakuru, Kenya, May, June and July 2006.

²²⁶Robert Morrell. *Changing Men in Southern Africa* (London: Zed Press, 2001).

²²⁷Excerpts from written diaries, Esifugwe School, Busia and Nakuru High School, Nakuru, Kenya, May and July 2006.

girls were usually caned on the palms of their hands. Most boys were highly critical of this form of discrimination, with a group of boys from Busia complaining that teachers hate them and pick on them, even if girls commit worse offences. As Konje, alleged:

Punishment is always harsher for boys than girls (we are beaten on buttocks and girls on hands). Girls are given more marks than boys. Girls are listened to and trusted. Boys are not listened and not trusted. If you are a boy, they beat you first, then ask you to explain later. Girls' mistakes are always seen as less.²²⁸

Other boys spoke graphically of how different and more positive the male teachers were with girls than boys, stating:

Kennedy: Male teachers usually show bright faces – he is happier assisting a girl than when he is assisting a boy. He smiles when helping a girl; when it's a boy even his mood is unpleasant.

Musa: Boys are at a disadvantage. When a teacher is bored by something, he says provoking statements just to get at the boys. If a boy says something, trying to reason with the teacher, he is told to 'shut up', but a girl is usually given a good ear.²²⁹

It seems, from these accounts, as if some of the male teachers felt they were competing as males with the boys, and were asserting themselves as powerful men by humiliating them. These boys were also angry at the reaction of girls who, they said, thought there was nothing wrong with this form of discrimination. However, two girls from Kisumu took the side of the boys, criticizing how corporal punishment was administered selectively according to gender, saying:

Sophie: They are treated differently. Some teachers, when they try to discipline a boy, they beat very thoroughly. Maybe the girl did something more wrong than the boy did but they will still beat the boy very hard as if he alone did the wrong thing. Some teachers actually never punish girls. I don't know why. Girls are gently

²²⁸ Ibid.

²²⁹ Interviewed by author, Oral Interviews, Esifugwe School, Busia, Kenya, May 2006.

punished. Other female teachers favor girls, like when they are supposed to be beaten on the buttocks, they beat them on the hands, while boys are beaten on the buttocks.

Nandwa: When the teacher is disciplining, he got to discipline in one form (not beating boys in one form and girls in another). It is very painful to be beaten on the buttocks. It is not fair for the boys; we are in the same class, and we do the same things. Many teachers hate boys. It seems the teachers suppose that the boys do not feel the same pain like the girls. If a boy refuses to be beaten on the buttocks and rather asks to be beaten on the hand like the girls, he is told that he will be taken to the staff room and be beaten there. Or he has to go out of the class. So, in the class, girls are treated with higher regard than boys . . . Although this is the case with the treatment of boys and girls, boys are the ones who perform better. Girls just relax, knowing that they will not be severely punished for their failure.²³⁰

The notion expressed here – that boys are expected to outperform girls and may be punished if they do not do so – was clearly a familiar one, which was supported in the group discussions with other girls saying:

Melissa: Like in our Swahili lesson, girls performed better than the boys. One time the teacher gave back our test papers and said that girls had performed better than boys; she told the boys she was going to beat them because they were not supposed to be led by girls and went ahead and beat them. I think this is being gender insensitive, telling boys to perform better . . . we are taught about equality yet teachers don't practice it. It is unfair.

Interviewer: What do you think about this?

Andeso: I think it is okay, because girls are fragile. However, it is unfair to boys as they are always punished since they cause more trouble.²³¹

This is a striking illustration of the problems, which arise not just for girls because of the construction of boys as superior to them in a patriarchal culture, but also for boys themselves. Indeed, being expected to live up to high expectations in education and employment was identified by girls in Kenya as among the key problems facing boys.

²³⁰Interviewed by author, Oral Interviews, St. Augustine High School, Kisumu, Kenya, June 2006.

²³¹Interviewed by author, Oral Interviews, Nakuru High School, Nakuru, Kenya, July 2006.

By punishing boys for failing to outperform girls, teachers are, of course, constructing girls as essentially inferior to boys. Notably however, the girls did not complain about this expectation, perhaps because they were pleased that they were not being subjected to corporal punishment for their poor performances. Rather than criticizing their teachers for treating girls as subordinate to boys, most girls and boys indicated that the teachers were showing favoritism to girls – as manifested in their harsher punishment of boys. Even Melissa, who suggested that punishing boys and not girls for poor schoolwork might not be in the girls' educational interests, concentrated much more on how the boys were disadvantaged.

Interestingly, students' views on the superior position of girls in relation to the selective application of corporal punishment contrast strikingly with the accounts of girls being subordinated and marginalized in the classroom. However, the tendency to punish boys more frequently and harshly than girls does not reflect the view that they are less significant than girls. On the contrary, as Spender has found, teachers tend to experience boys as more demanding than girls, and may control their classes by giving boys more space and attention – and punishing them more.²³² It is worth mentioning that how boys are punished for failing to outperform girls, suggests that they are more intelligent and academically significant than girls.

Among the boys interviewed in Nakuru, there were different reactions to the disparity between punishments meted out by teachers. Some boys felt alienated, uncomfortable and anxious during lessons, which perhaps made them more likely to

²³²D. Spender, *Invisible Women* (London: Writers and Readers, 1982).

undermine the teacher's authority, and therefore more likely to be punished.

However, other boys derived a sense of superiority over girls as a result of being beaten, believing that as boys they were strong enough to withstand the pain, and that the experience of being beaten harshly would mould them into stronger men. As one boy commented, "boys do not care (about being beaten), and seem to enjoy the attention, and they feel masculine about it, and they feel girls should not be beaten, as they are weak."

One girl also subscribed to the view that boys were naturally more attuned to being beaten because of their strength, or at least that girls were not so because of their fragility. These constructions of masculinity and femininity being promoted by the selective application of corporal punishment have extremely worrying implications: notably that it is through violent relations (and one's ability to buckle down in the face of violence) that one is able to prove one's masculinity. Corporal punishment is highly problematic, not least because it mitigates against the possibility of friendly, constructive and learner centered relations with teachers and students, which we believe are essential for effective HIV/AIDS and life skills education. Female teachers were idealized by some of the boys as counselors, as people they felt able to talk to about their problems, precisely because they perceived male teachers to be hostile to them and likely to beat them. They stated:

Sunny: I like lady teachers because they can also be counselors and help you with your problem. If it is a male teacher, he will just say 'you are a boy and you should deal with the problem', but the lady teacher will counsel you.

Interviewer: What do the other boys and girls feel? Do you also like teachers who can counsel you?

Mukiri: The lady teachers are good. They treat you like their blood children. It is because they have their own children and look at you as their children.²³³

²³³ Interviewed by author, Oral Interviews, Nakuru High School, Nakuru, Kenya, July 2006.

Taking a stand against teacher and student violence are exactly the kinds of qualities that are required for responsible and effective HIV/AIDS education. However, these qualities are not natural attributes, that women are naturally more student-friendly or more suited to be learner centered HIV/AIDS educators. On the contrary, gender identities are not fixed, but are constructed through interaction with others – and are therefore always open to change. The researcher would argue that one of the ways in which male teachers identify as strong, macho males is precisely by being tough against boys and beating them. This selective application of corporal punishment is very problematic as it contributes to a culture of male violence. By witnessing and experiencing such violence from their male teachers, boys are being encouraged to use violence as a way of asserting themselves in relation to other young people. Although many of them may be hostile to the teachers for picking on them, the researcher suggests that these teachers still represent powerful male role models. For boys to become more sensitive and caring – and not to regard these as purely feminine qualities – it is vital that both male and female teachers become learner centered life skills educators. Friendly, non-judgmental male teachers encouraging their students to speak about their pleasures, concerns and anxieties would send out a powerful message that it is possible for boys and men to be just as caring and sensitive as girls and women.

Culture, Tradition, Modernity, and Gender and Sexual Relations

Many of the boys and girls interviewed spoke about tradition and modernity and often described themselves as traditional or modern individuals. Like male and female, the researcher would argue that these categories exist only in relation to one another, and are usually constructed and invoked in a discursive way. Why, for example, are

traditional and modern so significant to specific individuals? Do boys and girls attach different meanings to them? The researcher was particularly interested in the relationship between the various ways that different boys and girls invoke culture, tradition and modernity, and how they present and construct their gender and sexual identities in relation to them.

In Kenya, tradition and modernity were often defined in terms of personal appearance and its accessories. Schoolgirls in both Nakuru and Kisumu described as modern the wearing of short or tight clothes, the use of hairsprays, and the wearing of high-heeled shoes, as well as the completion of one's formal education. By comparison, the boys in these sites constructed modernity as the freedom to choose one's wives, the sharing of housework between sexes, urban living, and access to modern amenities such as telephones, television, video machines and radios.²³⁴ Kenyan girls and boys saw themselves as either modern or traditional and sometimes as both, as illustrated in the comments below:

I am modern because I learn in Nakuru.

I am traditional for wearing long dresses and modern for cutting my hair short and attending school.

I am traditional. Modernity is not good – it makes people go to cinemas.²³⁵

In Nakuru, many of the boys and girls identified modernity with a lack of respect for elders, dressing badly in tight, short or transparent outfits, and watching bad movies – presumably those with a sexual content. Some of the young participants viewed the

²³⁴Fatuma Chege, *Gender Values, Schooling, and Transition to Adulthood: A Study of Female and Male Pupils from Two Urban Primary Schools in Kenya*, Unpublished PhD thesis (University of Cambridge, U.K: 2001).

²³⁵Excerpts from focus group discussions, Esifugwe school, Busia, St. Augustine High School, Kisumu, and Nakuru High School, Nakuru, Kenya, May, June and July 2006.

participation of boys in duties at home as a positive development in gender relations in the domestic arena. Indeed, some of the Kisumu girls criticized parents for not allowing boys to participate in domestic work, even when it was clear that the boys wanted to do so. In a Kisumu group interview, girls and boys portrayed more girls (seven) than boys (four) constructing themselves as future professionals in the medical, legal and architectural fields, which are traditionally viewed as male preserves. None of the boys aspired to become nurses or secretaries, while only one of them wanted to become a teacher. These findings suggested that girls are receptive to new ways of constructing femininity and thus changing the traditional image of womanhood, while boys seemed to favor traditional forms of masculinity.

The girls who were described as bad for being too sexual, going out, drinking and having boyfriends, were often criticized for being *too modern* by both boys and girls. Only girls, and never boys, were divided into good and bad according to how sexual they were perceived to be. Only girls, never boys, were blamed for being too modern and turning their backs on traditional African values. Perhaps because of their concern to be regarded as good, many girls, especially rural ones, said they liked the traditional way of living, associating this with not smoking or drinking, not wearing miniskirts, and not being seen with many boys. In Busia, some girls admitted going to night clubs, but became quiet when the other girls in the group made it clear that they would not go to night clubs because they did not want to be associated with prostitution or being too modern. Boys, on the other hand, said they liked modernity, which they associated with free expression of feelings and freedom of movement, indicating that their liking of modernity was not a problem for boys – as it seemed to be for many girls.

In Nakuru, girls who were described as rich, who lived in the suburbs, went out at night and wore fashionable clothes came in for a lot of criticism. They were said to be immoral, too modern, western and forgetful of their culture. These girls were nicknamed *dame wa mtaa* or, loosely translated, ladies of the streets. The following excerpt is from an interview with some teenage boys on the topic of *dame wa mtaa*.

They had this to say:

I like *dame wa mtaa* but not their clothing. They lie a lot, especially about their backgrounds. They can tell you that they are only three in their family and, 'I'm the last-born. My sister is in London and my brother in America and he has a business that's doing well – selling E-class Benz. My dad when I'm home does not allow me to speak in Kikuyu' . . . but if you hit her, she will speak the greatest Kikuyu you have ever heard (laughter) . . . I prefer a cabbage who is a traditional girl – who will not show me off.²³⁶

The boy in the above excerpt was angry with *dame wa mtaa* because he thought they were artificial and pretended to be western when they were really Kikuyu-speaking Kenyans, which he claimed, he could demonstrate if he hit them. Like many other young men, he was particularly angry about the *dame wa mtaa* because they were relatively independent and powerful young women. He said he preferred cabbage girls, who were more ordinary and less glamorous than *dame wa mtaa*, because they were traditional. By this, he meant they were less assertive and independent – and so did not threaten his power and authority as a young man.

In all the study sites, the boys spoke strongly against miniskirts and the *dame wa mtaa* who wore them. Many spoke of this as a violation of African norms and expectations, thus constructing for themselves a powerful position as upholders of these values. Research has shown how older black male students in Zimbabwe also position

²³⁶Interviewed by author, Oral interviews, Nakuru High School, Nakuru, Kenya, July 2006.

themselves as arbiters and spokespeople for an authentic black or African culture, in relation to black women students who are constructed as its potential betrayers – and are admonished when adopting styles and ideas seen as overly western.²³⁷ The appeal to people not to turn their backs on tradition and culture results in the control and monitoring of the behavior of girls, not boys. It is girls' freedoms to dress how they please and go out when and with whom they want that are being restricted. Many girls do not do these things out of fear of being criticized in the way that the boy above is criticizing *dame wa mtaa*. Many of the girls interviewed were also critical of the *dame wa mtaa*, presenting themselves, in opposition, as good girls. Notably, however, it was not girls from the main urban areas (many of whom identified as or aspired to be *dame wa mtaa*), but girls from rural Busia who spoke out most critically and with a great deal of emotion about the *dame wa mtaa*.

As mentioned earlier, girls, and not boys are sexualized or made the objects of sexual desire, and how girls wearing miniskirts are sexualized and condemned for it. In Busia, the sexualization of girls as they reached puberty found its institutionalized expression in what was constructed as the traditional practice of confinement or initiation. In the following excerpt, a group of girls in their late teens are talking about their initiation confinement experiences. The discussion went as follows:

Interviewer: What were you taught when you were taken through the process of confinement?

²³⁷Robert Pattman. "The Beer Drinkers Say I had a Nice Prostitute but the Church Goers Talk About Things Spiritual – Learning to be Men at a Teachers' College in Zimbabwe" In *Changing Men in Southern Africa*, edited Morrell, R (London: Zed Press, 2001); Gaidzanwa, R. "The Politics of the Body and the Politics of Control: An Analysis of Class, Gender and Cultural Issues in Student Politics at the University of Zimbabwe" *Zambezia* 20 (1993).

- Nasimiyu: After bathing, your mother's friend, who you have asked for advice on what has happened to you, will give you a *kitenge* (cloth wrapper) to wrap around you and tell you to sit on a *kiti moto* (traditional three legged stool) and then take the blood stained kitenge to your mother. She will then boil chicken with traditional medicine for you to eat. They don't put salt in the chicken.
- Nabwire: Then the elders from the clan will start coming. They will beat you if you never used to obey them or if you were rude.
- Chichi: You are also told not to play with small girls because you have grown up.
- Nasimiyu: You are also told not to play with young girls or boys because, when you start your periods and stain your skirt with blood, they would get a surprise and start laughing at you.
- Chichi: You are told not to play with boys because they can make you pregnant.
- Nabwire: You are told to respect elders.
- Tukio: You are taught how to dance in bed for men.
- Interviewer: What is the bad part of the process of confinement?
- Nasimiyu: The part of pinching thighs and beating if you never used to obey elders.
- Nabwire: The part of teaching how to dance in bed because it encourages prostitution. You can get tempted in trying to practice what you were taught by sleeping with different boys and end up becoming pregnant or contracting STDs or AIDS.
- Interviewer: What is good about what you are taught in confinement?
- Tukio: It is good to be *mkhebe* (a girl undergoing confinement) because you are taught what you did not know. (Murmurs of agreement).²³⁸

What is striking is how these girls are constructed as sexual by being taught to distance themselves from younger, immature girls and boys, while also avoiding older boys who may construct them as objects of desire. Although they do not actually say it, confinement is thus teaching them that the only relationship they can have with males (apart from with elders) is with their future husbands. Their identities as girls are already being defined in relation to these males, as they are taught "how to dance in bed for

²³⁸Excerpts from focus group discussions, Esifugwe School, Busia, Kenya, May 2006.

men.” One of the effects of sexualizing girls in this focused and restrictive way is, as one girl suggests, to encourage girls to develop purely sexual relationships with boys and men – for there are no other types of relationships open to them. By so doing, they are likely to be blamed for engaging in prostitution (as Nabwire says), a term commonly used to refer to girls who are constructed as being too modern and violating tradition and culture by being sexually enticing to men. Ironically, what is regarded as a traditional practice actually contributes to a situation in which girls are singled out and blamed for being too modern.

As suggested earlier, the type of messages being conveyed to girls about themselves and boys during their confinement are extremely problematic. It is a matter of concern that pubescent girls’ identities are suddenly and overwhelmingly defined by sexuality while boys, are defined not in terms of their gender or sexuality but as free and universal subjects, who do not receive much advice or help from parents and elders relating to sexuality.²³⁹ The focus on sexuality as a defining feature of girls as they reach puberty also implies that sexuality is insignificant for young people below this age – a view that is very much at odds with the findings. In the following mixed interview, coming of age is firmly associated with fundamental changes in the identities of girls (in spite of the male interviewer’s attempts to subvert this by asking if *he* has come of age, given the size of *his* breasts). It is also associated with girls being taught to become self-conscious about their bodies and learning to wear long skirts through the practice of confinement. The discussion went as follows:

Interviewer: When is coming of age?
Ciku: When the breasts droop

²³⁹De Beauvoir, S. *The Second Sex* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972).

- Interviewer: When they grow bigger?
 All in chorus: Ee! Yes!
 Interviewer: So since mine are big, I have come of age?
 Jane: They haven't drooped, Sir.
 Njeri: When the nipples are outstanding, Sir.
 Atieno: Even the voice changes
 Florence: You can know when you notice someone that wore short things now wearing long skirts and *kitenges* and portraying a lot of respect at home.
 Nancy: They hide the girl and send the youngest child to take food to her
 Interviewer: Why do they hide her?
 Nancy: It's a tradition where they teach them.
 Melissa: You can tell because they have dots around their knees.
 Interviewer: How do you see the dots?
 Andeso: When I am putting on my uniform and weeding, you just see them and know that that person is of age.
 Interviewer: So what happens when one comes of age?
 Rose: She is taken to an elder instructor.
 Jane: They teach and advise her to stop playing with friends who like going to bars.
 Interviewer: So if you go to the bar, you lose your coming of age?
 Njeri: No, they protect you from getting pregnant when you have come of age.²⁴⁰

When discussing the bad aspects of modernization, the example most often given was of indecent dressing – short skirts, tight trousers – worn by post pubescent girls and women. Confinement is presented here as an institution that not only inducts girls who come of age into traditional practices – including the wearing of long skirts and *kitenges* – but also makes them susceptible to corruption. The young women are portrayed as people who might violate tradition by going to the bar, having sex and getting pregnant. For all these reasons, they are in need of constant protection.

In Nakuru, female teachers tended to criticize traditional cultural practices for promoting the spread of HIV/AIDS. Ironically, they cited these in response to a question about how elements of Kikuyu culture and tradition could contribute to teaching about

²⁴⁰Interviewed by author, Oral interviews, Nakuru High School, Nakuru, Kenya, July 2006.

HIV/AIDS and sexuality today. In contrast, a male teacher responded by blaming females for no longer adhering to what he regards as the norms of Kikuyu culture – namely the wearing of long dresses. As with boys' criticisms of *dame wa mtaa* and the discussions about confinement, females are constructed as potential signifiers of corruption associated with modernization. At the same time, however, the male teacher presents himself as a modern, gender sensitive man who thinks it is important to observe gender equality in addressing matters related to sexuality, such as pregnancy. The discussion goes as follows:

- | | |
|--------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Interviewer: | Which elements of Kikuyu culture and tradition do you think can contribute to teaching about HIV/AIDS and sexuality today? |
| Melissa: | We should discourage the use of cutting objects shared by many patients who use traditional healing practices such as <i>wembe</i> , (which involves) slight cutting on certain parts of the body and smearing with herbal medicine, and the linking of each other's blood as a sign of the bond of brotherhood for close and unrelated friends. |
| Njeri: | We should discourage polygamous marriages. |
| Chege : | In Kikuyu culture, it was a norm for females to put on long dresses, whereas nowadays women use short, tight dresses that expose thighs and pants to provoke males. Punitive measures meted out to girls who became pregnant before marriage were too heavy and deterrent. However, this was unfair because it punished only girls ²⁴¹ |

One practice that is associated with culture and tradition, and was strongly opposed by the female teachers, is female circumcision. The practice was opposed not only on the grounds that it poses serious health risks, including the possibility of contracting HIV/AIDS through un-sterilized surgical instruments, but also because it makes girls very much the objects of male desire. It must be pointed out that, although female circumcision is often referred to in the same tenor as male circumcision, the two

²⁴¹Interviewed by author, Oral interviews, Nakuru High School, Nakuru, Kenya, July 2006.

procedures are fundamentally different in effect and procedure – and the removal of the clitoris can only be fairly compared with the complete removal of the penis. In the following interview with a female circumciser in Nakuru, she praises the culture of circumcision as an effective way of making the female genitals *attractive* to men. She stresses the need to even infibulate girls in order to ensure that they do not engage in sexual activity before marriage. This is an example of how traditional cultural beliefs are used to sexualize girls and to control their sexuality. The circumciser describes uncircumcised girls as unclean and, when she is asked to recommend ways of combating AIDS, she argues that infibulation is the best method by stating:

- | | |
|--------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Interviewer: | So how can we prevent this disease of AIDS? |
| Circumciser: | Everyone who has to marry has to undergo a test before marriage. Women should be infibulated to control their sexuality, especially young girls. Girls in town these days are not infibulated and therefore go with any man when they feel like it and they are infected with AIDS. Any woman with a long clitoris are smelling. (Emphatically) |
| Interviewer: | What do you do with girls in relation to circumcision? |
| Circumciser: | I cut the entire clitoris and its sides, stitch the whole thing, and leave only a very small hole for urination. What will a man do with a woman whose vagina is so wide open like a road? Men enjoy women who have a tight and infibulated vagina. (Laughs) |
| Interviewer: | Do you think the girls who hover about with men have been circumcised wrongly? |
| Circumciser: | Yes, because these days they speak of <i>sunna</i> (cutting only the tip of the clitoris). I call it nonsense. <i>Sunna</i> will only promote immorality. In the old days, if a man sees a wide-open vagina, it was shameful and a girl was supposed to be divorced on the spot, but these days men are tolerating . . . |

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The graphic illustration above is a good demonstration of how tradition is invoked and used to sexualize girls and to control their sexuality. Like many of the young people

²⁴² Interviewed by author, Oral interviews, Nakuru social hall, Nakuru, Kenya, July 2006.

interviewed, the circumciser associates modernity with sexual immorality and the status and behavior of girls – not boys. When she begins “Girls in town these days,” the reader knows she is about to condemn them, for this has become a cliché – a signifier for all that is wrong with society. They are blamed, like the *dame wa mtaa*, for being too sexual and for contracting and spreading AIDS, as well as for having clitorises that smell. Girls and women (and not the boys and men they sleep with) are often presented in HIV/AIDS education as the spreaders of AIDS. What the circumciser regards as problematic is female rather than male desire. Indeed, she wants girls to be the objects of male desire, and her aim is to provide men with what they enjoy: women who have a tight and infibulated vagina. Significantly, she laughs at this, as if she sees desire expressed in this way as naughty, but nevertheless condones it. The only criticism that she levels against men these days is their toleration, rather than their condemnation, of wide open vaginas. Here it is women, not men, who are being blamed for being promiscuous.

This excerpt clearly illustrates how tradition and modernity are being *constructed* and played off against each other in ways that sexualize girls and regulate and control them. The circumciser even criticizes forms of circumcision these days for being, as it were, too modern and not sufficiently traditional, for failing to stem female desire and for promoting immorality – the assumption being, of course, that it is female desire that is immoral. Notably, the circumciser’s narrative reveals no concern for any violation of girls’ rights over their bodies – or of their rights to equal sexual pleasure with their male partners. It is clear that the rationalization of female circumcision as a rite of passage to adulthood, and a basis for constructing ideal womanhood, have no equivalents in male

circumcision. As girls are often circumcised while under the age of consent (sixteen years), and while still under the care of their parents or guardians, their basic rights to protection, care and health are automatically violated. Studies have shown that, in addition to clitoridectomies, genital incisions and infibulations that cause the deaths of numerous girls due to hemorrhage and shock, survivors continue to suffer from obstructed passage of the menses and urine, constriction of the birth canal, and further anguish when undergoing de-fibulation during the consummation of marriage.²⁴³

Grounding the cultural value of womanhood in female circumcision raises fundamental concerns over how best to incorporate conventional medical knowledge and human rights education into cultural frameworks that support traditional rites of passage. One successful example has been among some communities in Kenya that have adapted humane rights of passage, such as the circumcision of girls "without the cut," or what is known as "cutting through words."²⁴⁴

Discussion about tradition and modernity, as seen, often arouses strong emotions. It suggests that these are not simply descriptive labels denoting historical phases, but discursive constructions that are intimately bound up with how people construct their very identities. Tradition is evaluated positively and modernity negatively by boys as well as girls, and by adults in ways that implicate females and not males. In the

²⁴³Noor, A.G. *Access and Retention of Girls in Primary Education, Wajir District, North-Eastern Province of Kenya*. Unpublished MA Thesis, Kenyatta University, Nairobi, Kenya (2003); Fatuma Chege, *Gender Values, Schooling, and Transition to Adulthood: A Study of Female and Male Pupils from Two Urban Primary Schools in Kenya*. Unpublished PhD thesis (University of Cambridge, U.K.: 2001); A. Jennings, *The Nubians of West Aswan: Village Women in the Midst of Change* (Boulder: Reinner Publishers, 1994).

²⁴⁴Nzwili, F. 2003. New Ritual Replaces Female Genital Mutilation. In *Women's E-News* (www.womensenews.org/article.cfm/dyn/aid/1284)

interviews, it was usually – if not always – girls and women who were accused of being prone to corruption by westernization. Girls were blamed for imbibing and imitating western ideas about sexuality and gender, with boys often presenting themselves, in contrast, as upholders of tradition and culture. The effect of this was to control the behavior of all girls, whether they identify as modern or not – and to assert male authority. Both boys and girls, however, also constructed modernity very positively. Indeed many, especially young urban boys and girls, identified as modern in comparison to their parents. Some of these included the same boys who blamed girls for being too modern – a contradiction that could effectively be explored in HIV/AIDS and life skills education.

It was observed in Busia that one of the problems that HIV/AIDS and life skills educators face is the perception of many parents – and even some children – that sex education, and initiating sexual activity can violate traditional practices. However, what are perceived as traditional values may be reconciled with a commitment to girls' and women's rights. As was found in the Busia study, the Luhya cultural code is concerned with upholding women's rights and protecting them from sexual abuse and harassment from men. Rather than interpreting sex education as an indication that girls and women are weak and need to be controlled in order to protect them from predatory males, it could be interpreted more positively. For example, educators could develop an HIV/AIDS curriculum with a component on gender and sexual politics, as an assertion of female rights to education and free movement.

CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study was designed within the framework of a social constructionist and human rights approach, which entails the development of community capacity to enable people to better understand their rights – and to claim them as they participate meaningfully in their realization.²⁴⁵ Within such a framework, as this study shows, young people can become active stakeholders in HIV/AIDS and life skills education alongside significant adults, with major practical benefits for both.

The recommendations outlined here following are conceptualized within this framework, positioning young people as stakeholders who are also subjects and actors, and adults as duty-bearers and rights holders. The activities underscore the relationships between young people and their adult duty-bearers in pursuing positive educational outcomes through methods that reflect human rights values, not just in the outcomes of HIV/AIDS and life skills education, but in the learning processes themselves. The goal of curbing HIV infection through effective education, and strategies to achieve positive educational outcomes, are complementary within this framework.²⁴⁶

²⁴⁵UNICEF, ESAR, *Operationalisation for ESAR of UNICEF Global Guidelines for Human Rights Programming*, a draft report for UNICEF ESAR RMT meeting, (Nairobi, Kenya, August 23rd, 2001).

²⁴⁶De Waal A and Argenti, N. (eds), *Young Africa: Realising the Rights of Children and Youth* (Trenton, NJ and Asmara, Eritrea, African World Press, 2002).

Dissemination of the Study Findings

Practical and accessible means are being sought to disseminate the study findings to as many interested parties as possible, including those who participated as interviewees in each study region. Many of the interviewees expressed a strong desire to participate in such ongoing study, which was perhaps an indication of how valuable they found their discussions of issues related to gender and sexuality with non-judgmental and genuinely interested adults. For this reason alone, it is important that contact be re-established and maintained with these participants. In discussing the findings with them, the researcher hopes to:

- Obtain feedback (and generate more study data) about the extent to which the findings do justice to the interviewees' experiences, attitudes and feelings;
- Encourage the interviewees to further reflect critically upon their gendered identities and relations with others;
- Encourage them to see how others, whether parents, teachers, or other girls and boys, see them and identify in relation to them. Parents need to know more, for example, about local sexual cultures, children's identities and experiences, their sense of alienation from their parents in relation to issues concerning sexuality, and their desire for greater communication with them. Boys need to know about girls' desires and their concerns about expressing these for fear of being labeled in derogatory ways;
- Encourage discussion about what can be done to minimize the spread of HIV/AIDS, involving as broad an array of interested and concerned parties as possible.

In answer to the research question, young people do not form their identities in a social vacuum, but in multifarious social contexts, a fact that is vital in informing effective HIV/AIDS and life skills education. Communication within and between various categories of actors, including the key structures of family, school and community, must be a core concern of all life skills and HIV/AIDS education. Parents and educators, including school and religious teachers, need to communicate with young people about sex, not in a moralistic and authoritarian way, which can serve to further alienate them, but in human, inclusive, gender sensitive ways.²⁴⁷

Although young Kenyans develop their own sexual cultures partly by imitating adults, these remain largely hidden from adults. To some extent, indeed, these cultures are constructed in opposition to adult authority. As the study has shown, some boys view multiple sexual partners as a source of status among their peers, while some girls acquire status for going out with older men. In order to facilitate communication between parents and young people about sex and relationships, the researcher suggests that parents and children be invited to workshops at which the study can present its key findings, particularly those pertaining to:

- The desire of children for open communication about sex with their parents, and the discrepancy between parental fantasies that deny associations of sex with childhood and early adolescence and the sexual experiences and identities of the young people interviewed;

²⁴⁷UNICEF, Government of Swaziland, *Trainers Manual on Gender Issues in Education and Children's Rights* (Swaziland, Ministry of Education, 2002), 92.

- Boys' identification with and criticism of their fathers for being unfaithful and for going out drinking;
- The relative absence of many fathers in the lives of their children;
- Parents' concerns for their children, especially in the light of HIV/AIDS and life skills education, and how these concerns differ between sons and daughters.

During these workshops, recorded extracts from the interviews could be presented to illustrate pertinent points; for example, thirteen-year-old children talking about their sexual experiences. However, it is very important, for ethical reasons, that the extracts used are not ones in which the parents present could recognize their children, or vice versa. Indeed, the study strongly recommends that the voices of the children be blurred to ensure anonymity just as their names have been disguised in the interview transcripts.

Educating Politicians

It is extremely worrying that Kenya's Ministry of Education assumes that fourteen to sixteen year-olds are either not having sex or not even thinking about sexuality. This fact led to the numerous negotiations with the Ministry to obtain permission to interview school children under the age of sixteen. One important finding from the Kisumu study was the accounts of young people about friends much younger than them who were having sex and babies. It was also clear in all the study sites that boyfriends, girlfriends and sexuality featured prominently in the lives of nearly all of the young interviewees – even those who defined themselves against negative reference points as good girls. The researcher would thus recommend, that life skills and HIV/AIDS education should be taught to children much younger than sixteen years old.

Such education should not make sex and sexual relations its central issues, but rather focus upon young people's identities, relations and cultures *in general*, while recognizing that sexuality is a key aspect of all of these.

Addressing Desires and Feelings Without Moralizing

Desire was conspicuous by its absence in the different forms of sexuality education reported in the study. The effect of this is not only to divorce sexuality education from the ways that young people think and talk about sex and their feelings outside the classroom, but also to make talk about sex and sexual pleasure seem dirty and surreptitious – and something young people should only engage in with their peers, out of earshot of their teachers. It is important that HIV/AIDS education, when addressing sexual pleasure and desire, does not simply associate this with bad things, nor as something that is more male than female. Perpetuating the popular view that men have an overwhelming sex drive, from which girls and women need to be protected, will only contribute to a culture in which the behavior of girls and women is unduly controlled and regulated. Sexuality education should thus address sexual desire as a female as well as a male attribute, in addition to the kinds of pleasures, problems and anxieties that boys and girls experience as a result of its different constructions.

Longitudinal Studies

The researcher recommends that further studies be developed to follow up the same young people interviewed in this study, in order to examine the changing ways in which they construct their gendered and sexual identities as they grow older.

Capacity Development

The regional study showed high levels of commitment and enthusiasm in conducting imaginative and creative forms of qualitative study. It will be important to utilize the skills and expertise that the young research team members and observers derived from this experience in future qualitative study projects relating to gender, sexuality and HIV/AIDS in education. The researcher recommends that some of the less experienced researchers undergo further training, for example in data analysis to help develop the skills necessary.

Educational Resources

It should be noted that learner centered and gender sensitive forms of life skills education are difficult to implement without adequate resources that are gender sensitive and encourage participatory learning.²⁴⁸ Learning is even more difficult in classrooms that are overcrowded, which was a common finding during the study. The researcher recommends that the Kenyan Ministry of Education urgently address its lack of educational resources as a hurdle to the effective delivery of HIV/AIDS and life skills education.

²⁴⁸Bunyi, G. "Gender Analysis of Life Skills/ HIV/AIDS/ Standard Teaching and Learning Materials in the East and Southern Africa Region, *Consultant's Report* (Programme Division, NYHQ. 2000).

APPENDIX

A. Focus Group Discussion Guide

We would like to thank you all for coming today. My name is _____. My colleague(s) is/are called _____ and _____. We are from the Clark Atlanta University and ICD. We are conducting a study on gendered and sexual identities, HIV/AIDS education and sexual health matters in this community. Some of the topics we are going to discuss concern sexual relationships between young men and women and HIV/AIDS. We are particularly interested in how people get sexual health information, how women and men behave sexually, and what people think about the relationships between women and men. We feel by talking to people like you we can best find out about practices, opinions and feelings about these issues in order to help us improve sexual relationships between men and women and health services in our country.

There are no wrong or right answers. We are interested in your views, so please feel comfortable to say what you honestly feel. I have a list of topics I would like us to talk about but please feel free to bring up any other issues you feel are relevant.

During the discussion _____ will be taking notes to keep track of what has been covered, and to remind me if I forget to ask certain things. However, so that we do not have to worry about getting every word down on paper, we will also record the discussions on tape. Please, do not let that worry you. The tapes and written material will be kept safe and not shared outside the research team. After writing our report, all the tapes and written notes will be destroyed, so no one will know who said what.

Regarding the language, we want you to feel comfortable throughout the discussion, so please just use the language that you use when you chat with friends. Finally, please try

to let everyone have a turn at saying something, since all your views are important, and please try to keep the discussion within the group. The discussion is confidential.

Are there any questions? May we please begin.

Ice-breaker exercise. Ask each participant to introduce themselves (first names only) and what they do.

Focus Group Discussion Survey Instrument

The following were the questions used as a guide to the focus group discussions.

A. Knowledge and sources of sexual and HIV/AIDS information

Q1. How do girls/boys like yourselves know about matters concerning sex, contraception, STDs, and HIV/AIDS? (Explore what issues are talked about with different people; Formal and non-formal sources - friends, siblings, parents, other relatives, teachers/school, church, medical, media – magazines/newspapers, films, radio).

Probes:

a). Do you find it easy or difficult to talk about these issues with the people you have mentioned? Please explain.

b) In your opinion, which is the most important source of sexual information? Please explain.

Q2. What do girls/boys like yourselves want to know about sexual matters? How would you like to get this information?

B. Sexual relationships

Q3. At what age do you think boys and girls in this community start to have girl/boy friends?

Q4. At what age would you say boys and girls in this community start having sexual intercourse?

(Probe for motivations for sex, proportions pre-marital sexually active; opinions about premarital sex, sexual pressure, coercion)

Q5. A) (FOR GIRLS ONLY). If a boy feels like making love with his girl and the girl does not want to, what can the girl do? How does the boy react? What reasons might be there for a girl to refuse to have sex with her partner?

B) (FOR BOYS ONLY). If a boy feels like making love with his girl the girl does not want to, what can he do?

C. Perception of risk of HIV/AIDS, risk-aversion strategies and sexual decision-making.

Q6. In your opinion, what can happen to boys/girls like yourselves as a result of sex?

(Awareness of sexual risks). Probes: a) What risks are girls/boys likely to worry about?

b) Who should be responsible for protecting against these risks? (Explore gender differences for preventing different types of risks)

Q7. As far as you know, how do people (in general) get AIDS?

Q8. To what extent do you think HIV/AIDS is a risk to this community? Please explain?

(Explore risky sexual practices and/or cultural beliefs and practices). What are the consequences of this disease for the family? In your opinion are boys and girls of your age in danger of contracting AIDS? Why/why not?

Q9. In your opinion, what are boys/girls in this community doing to reduce their chances of getting STDs/HIV/AIDS? Probe: Do you think there are some people (in general) who know that they can get HIV/AIDS and are doing nothing to prevent it? What kind of people are they? What are the reasons for their risk-taking behavior?

Q10. In your opinion, what does practicing 'safer sex' mean? (Sexual modes of STI/AIDS prevention).

Story for discussion

Facilitator/moderator: Kazuri is a girl who has a boy friend called Mbaya who works and lives in town. Kazuri stays in the village and Mbaya regularly goes to see her. But Kazuri is worried because she has heard that Mbaya has other girl friends in town. She does not know what she should do about their relationship. She does not want to leave Mbaya, but she is also afraid he will give her AIDS.

Q11. What do you think Kazuri should do? (Probes: If Kazuri does what you are saying, how do you think Mbaya will react? What are your opinions on condoms? What are the advantages of condoms? What are the disadvantages of condoms? (Explore uses and beliefs about condoms) When is condom use acceptable? With whom should condoms be used?)

Probes:

FOR GIRLS ONLY: Can a girl suggest to her boy friend using condoms? How can she ask him? How will he respond? We have heard that not all girls can suggest to their boy friends using condoms? What can you tell us about that? c) If the boy does not want to use condoms, can the girl convince him? How? In general are girls willing to use condoms? What about boys? Please explain. Where can a person get condoms? Is it easy or difficult for you girls to get condoms? Please explain.

FOR BOYS ONLY: Do you need your girl friend's permission to use condoms? Why not? b) In general are boys willing to use condoms? What about girls? Please explain.

c) Where can a person get condoms? Is it easy or difficult for you boys to get condoms? Please explain.

Q12. Do you think that a girl/boy should talk to a boy/girl about the fears she/he has of contracting AIDS? How can she/he bring up the subject? How will he/she react?

Q13. You girls/boys know what AIDS is about. Do you believe you have a responsibility to protect yourselves? To protect your partners? Probe: Would you inform your partner if you had STD? Why/why not? How about AIDS? Why/why not?

E. Conclusion

We are reaching the end of the discussion. Does anyone have anything to add or say before we turn off the tape recorder? Do any of you have any comments on how you feel the discussion went? Before you came, did you expect anything like this?

Just before you leave, could you fill this short questionnaire (we have few questions to ask each one on their own). This gives us some basic information on who takes part in these discussions. We do not need to know your name as it is anonymous, confidential.

END: Thank you very much for participating in this discussion.

B. In-Depth-Interview Discussion Guide

Introduction to in-depth-interview session (for unmarried, with sexual experience)

My name is _____. I am from the Clark Atlanta University. We are conducting a study on sexual health matters and relationships between men and women in this community. Some of the topics we are going to discuss concern sexual relationships between men and women and HIV/AIDS. We are particularly interested in how people form sexual relationships, how women and men behave sexually, and what people feel about sexual health services. We feel that by talking to people like you we can best find out about practices, opinions and feelings about these issues in order to help us improve sexual relationships between men and women and health services in our country.

I have a list of topics I would like us to talk about but please feel free to bring up any other issues you feel are relevant. Some of the questions that I am going to ask on sexual behavior and relations may be sensitive. I assure you that the interview is completely anonymous. Your name will not be written on this form and will never be used in connection with any of the information you tell me. You do not have to give me an answer to any questions that you do not wish to respond to and you may stop this interview at any time. However, your honest responses to these questions will help us to understand better what people think, say and do with regard to relationships between men and women and sexual health matters.

During the discussion we will be taking notes to keep track of what we have covered, and to remind me if I forget to ask certain things. However, so that I do not have to worry about getting every word down on paper, we will also record the discussion on tape.

Please, do not let that worry you. The tape and written material will be kept safe and not

shared outside the research team. After writing our report, all the tapes and written notes will be erased, so no one will know what you said.

Regarding the language, I would like you to feel comfortable throughout the talk, so please just use the language that you use when you chat with friends. Once again this discussion is confidential. Are there any questions you wish to ask? Please may we begin. In-Depth-Interview icebreaker exercise.

In-Depth-Interview Survey Instrument

I will start by asking questions about yourself

Categories Codes

Q1. School district

Busia	Kisumu	Nakuru
1	2	3

Q2. Division

Q3. Location

Q4. Sub-location

Q5. Sex

Male	Female
1	2

Q6. How old are you now?

13-19	20-24	25-29	30+
1	2	3	4

I would like to ask you about your marital status

Q7. Have you ever been married or lived with a man/woman as if you were married?

Currently married	Ever married	Never married
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1	2	3
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Q8. How long have you been married/were you married?

Less than a year

1-3 years	4-5 years	6+ years
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1	2	3
---	---	---

Q9. Never married: Have you ever had sexual intercourse?

Yes	No
-----	----

1	2
---	---

Q10. Have you ever attended school?

Yes	No
-----	----

1	2
---	---

Q11. What is the highest level of school you attended?

Primary	Secondary	University/College
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1	2	3
---	---	---

Q12. What is your religion?

Catholic	Protestant	Seventh Day Adventist	Muslim	Other	None
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1	2	3	4	5	6
---	---	---	---	---	---

Q13. What do you do for a living?

Salaried/wage employee	Business person	Farmer	Domestic work
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1	2	3	4
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Student	Other (specify)
---------	-----------------

4	5
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In-depth-Interview Guide*A. Sexual relationships: Nature and process*

Please tell me about your general sexual experiences. How many sexual partners have you had in your life? Have you had sex in the last 12 months? With how many partners? Have you had sex in the last 4 weeks? With how many partners? (Probe: casual or serious; concurrent or serial monogamous; sex for exchange of money/gifts/favors).

First sexual Intercourse: Now I would like to ask you about your first sexual intercourse.

At what age did you first have sexual intercourse? Was this with someone of the same age?

Q1. Did you have sexual intercourse with your first boyfriend partner? If not, what person did you first have sex with? How long after starting your relationship did you have first sex? What sexual activities did you engage in before having first sexual intercourse?

Q2. At the time did you consider this relationship to be serious or casual? Why? Do you think he/she considered the relationship as serious/casual? Why?

Q3. Did you want to have sex when you had it the first time? Please explain. (Probes: what influenced you to have sex the first time? At what place did you have sex the first time? Who decided that you have sex?

Q4. In general, how did you feel after your first sexual intercourse?

Q5. Did you talk to your first sexual partner about his/her previous sexual experiences?

Did your first sexual partner ask you about your previous sexual experiences?

Q6. Did you seek information about your first sexual partner from anyone? Where from and what about?

Q7. Did you use any form of contraception the first time you had sex?

Probes: (If yes), which method(s) of contraception did you use? How did you get them?

Who decided that you use that method? Why did you use that/those methods during your first sex and not another method?

Q8. Did you continue to have sexual intercourse with your first sexual partner? How long did the relationship last? Probes: a) (If contraception used at first sex?) Did you continue to use contraception all the time you had sex with your first sexual partner? b) What methods did you use? How did you get them? c) Why did you use that/those methods and not another method?

Q9. (If contraception not used every time) Why do you think you did not use contraception every time you had sex with your first sex partner?

Q10. (If didn't use contraception at first sex) After first sex in which you did not use contraception, did you consider using any form of contraception later in your relationship with your first sexual partner?

Probes: a) Can you remember why you started using contraception? Who decided that you use contraception? b) What methods did you use? How did you get them? c) Why did you choose to use that/those methods during sex and not another method?

Q11. (If never used contraception at all) Why do you think you never used contraception at all with your first sexual partner?

Q12. Did you talk about contraception with your first sexual partner?

Probes: a) (If yes) Who started the talk? Can you remember when you talked about it, was it some time or just before sex, during sex, after sex or perhaps not on the first time but afterwards during or in a later occasion of sex?

b) Can you remember how you or your first sexual partner started the subject of contraception? What were some of the things you both said? Did you talk about condoms? What did you talk about condoms? c) (If not talked) Can you remember if there was any reason(s) you did not talk about condoms with your first sexual partner?

Q13. Did you ever talk with anyone about your first sexual experience? What type of person did you talk to and what did you talk about?

If respondent has had more than one sexual partner in her/his life time and has had had a partner in the last 12 months, ask about the current or most recent sexual partner

Now I would like to ask you about your current/most recent sexual partner? Is this someone of the same age?

Q14. How long after starting your relationship did you have sex with your current/recent partner?

Q15. Do/did you consider this relationship to be serious or casual? Why? Do you think he/she considers/considered the relationship as serious/casual? Why?

Q16. Do/did you always want to have sex when you have/had it with your current/recent partner? Please explain. (Probes: What influences/influenced you to have sex with your current/recent partner?). Where do/did you usually have sex? Who decides that you have sex?

Q17. Do/did you talk to your current/recent sexual partner about his/her previous sexual experiences? Did your current/recent sexual partner ask you about your previous sexual experiences?

Q18. Did you seek information about your current/recent sexual partner from anyone? Where from and what about?

Q19. Do/did you use any form of contraception with your current/recent sexual partner?

Probes: (If yes), which method(s) of contraception do/did you use? How do/did you get them? Who decided that you use that method? Why do/did you use that/those methods and not another method?

Q20. How long have you had/did you have the relationship with your current/most recent sexual partner? a) Do/did you continue to use contraception all the time you have/had sex with your current/recent sexual partner? b) What methods do/did you use? How do/did you get them? Why do/did you use that/those methods and not another method?

Q21. (If contraception is/was not used every time) Why do you think you do/did not use contraception every time you have/had sex with your current/recent partner?

Q22. (If does not/didn't use contraception) Do/did you consider using any form of contraception later in your relationship with your current/recent sexual partner? Why? What methods? How will you/did you get them? Why would you /did you choose to use that/those method(s) and not another method?

Q23. Have you (did you) talked about contraception with your current/recent first sexual partner?

Probes: a) (If yes) Who started the talk? Can you remember when you talked about it, was it some time or just before sex, during sex, after sex or perhaps not on the first time but afterwards during or in a later occasion of sex?

b) Can you remember how you or your current/recent sexual partner started the subject of contraception? What were some of the things you both said? Did you talk about condoms? What about did you talk?

c) (If not talked) Can you remember if there was any reason(s) you have not/did not talk about condoms with your current/recent sex partner?

B. Perception of risk and risk-aversion strategies

Q24. Looking back since the time you became sexually active up to now, what risks are you likely to have faced as result of having sex?

Q25. What are you more worried about? Why? What makes you take these risks?

Q26. In your opinion, do you fear that your sex life might have put you in danger of contracting AIDS? Why? Would say currently you are in danger of contracting AIDS? Why? Have you ever talked to any of your sexual partners about the fears you have of contracting AIDS? Who started the subject? What did you talk about? How did your partner react?

Q27. What have you done to reduce your chances of getting STDs/HIV/AIDS? Have you ever had HIV/AIDS test? If yes, what made you have a test? If not, have you ever considered having one? Why? Do you personally feel that it has been easy or difficult for you to protect yourself against getting HIV/AIDS? Why? Is there a difference between you and your sexual partners in what you are saying, or feel?

Q28. Do you feel your partners have had other sexual partners? Why? How do you feel about this?

Q29. Would you say that you have ever been pressured into sex? What sort and how?

Q30. (If has ever used condoms) Has your use of condoms changed since hearing about HIV/AIDS? Probe: more or less regularly? When did the change occur? What made you change? If has never used condoms: Are you considering using condoms in future?

Q31. Can you suggest condom use to your partner? Please explain. a) If your partner does not want to use condoms, can you convince him/her? How? b) In general, are you willing to use condoms? Why? c) Is your partner willing to use condoms? Why?

Q32. Would you inform your partner if you had STD? Please explain. How about AIDS? Please explain.

Conclusion: We are reaching the end of our discussion. Do you have anything you would like to add or say regarding sexual behavior and HIV/AIDS? Do you have any comments on how you feel it went? Before you came, did you expect anything like this? Thanks so much for your time and responses.

C: Youth Assent Script/Form

We want to see if you would be willing to help us with a research project about things that youth think about, things that they feel, and things that they do. We'll ask you questions but it is different from school because there are no right or wrong answers. We just want to know what you really think.

If you decide to participate in the project with us, your answers will be kept just between you and me. I may not be able to keep this promise if you tell me that you or another young person is being hurt in some way, or if a magistrate asks me for some information. If that were happening, I would tell someone to help keep you or the other young person safe. You can also decide to stop at any time or can choose not to answer questions that you don't want to answer.

Do you have any questions? Would you be willing to do the project with us?

Young Person's signature (ages 18 and over)

Date

Parental Signature for all minors (ages 17 and under)

Date

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